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THE

BOSTONIANS

A Novel

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BY

HENRY JAMES

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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1886
By HENRY JAMES

BOOK SECOND.

THE BOSTONIANS.

XIX.

THIS idea of their triumph, a triumph as yet ultimate and remote, but preceded by the solemn vista of an effort so religious as never to be wanting in ecstasy, became tremendously familiar to the two friends, but especially to Olive, during the winter of 187–, a season which ushered in the most momentous period of Miss Chancellor's life. About Christmas a step was taken which advanced her affairs immensely, and put them, to her apprehension, on a regular footing. This consisted in Verena's coming in to Charles Street to stay with her, in pursuance of an arrangement on Olive's part with Selah Tarrant and his wife that she should remain for many months. The coast was now perfectly clear. Mrs. Farrinder had started on her annual grand tour; she was rousing the people, from Maine to Texas; Matthias Pardon (it was to be supposed) had received, temporarily at least, his quietus; and Mrs.

Luna was established in New York, where she had taken a house for a year, and whence she wrote to her sister that she was going to engage Basil Ransom (with whom she was in communication for this purpose) to do her law-business. Olive wondered what law-business Adeline could have, and hoped she would get into a pickle with her landlord or her milliner, so that repeated interviews with Mr. Ransom might become necessary. Mrs. Luna let her know very soon that these interviews had begun; the young Mississippian had come to dine with her; he hadn't got started much, by what she could make out, and she was even afraid that he didn't dine every day. But he wore a tall hat now, like a Northern gentleman, and Adeline intimated that she found him really attractive. He had been very nice to Newton, told him all about the war (quite the Southern version, of course, but Mrs. Luna didn't care anything about American politics, and she wanted her son to know all sides), and Newton did nothing but talk about him, calling him 'Rannie,' and imitating his pronunciation of certain words. Adeline subsequently wrote that she had made up her mind to put her affairs into his hands (Olive sighed, not unmagnanimously, as she thought of her sister's 'affairs'), and later still she mentioned that she was thinking strongly of taking him to be Newton's tutor. She wished this interesting child to be privately educated, and

it would be more agreeable to have in that relation a person who was already, as it were, a member of the family. Mrs. Luna wrote as if he were prepared to give up his profession to take charge of her son, and Olive was pretty sure that this was only a part of her grandeur, of the habit she had contracted, especially since living in Europe, of speaking as if in every case she required special arrangements.

In spite of the difference in their age, Olive had long since judged her, and made up her mind that Adeline lacked every quality that a person needed to be interesting in her eyes. She was rich (or sufficiently so), she was conventional and timid, very fond of attentions from men (with whom indeed she was reputed bold, but Olive scorned such boldness as that), given up to a merely personal, egotistical, instinctive life, and as unconscious of the tendencies of the age, the revenges of the future, the new truths and the great social questions, as if she had been a mere bundle of dress-trimmings, which she very nearly was. It was perfectly observable that she had no conscience, and it irritated Olive deeply to see how much trouble a woman was spared when she was constructed on that system. Adeline's 'affairs,' as I have intimated, her social relations, her views of Newton's education, her practice and her theory (for she had plenty of that, such as it was, heaven

save the mark!), her spasmodic disposition to marry again, and her still sillier retreats in the presence of danger (for she had not even the courage of her frivolity), these things had been a subject of tragic consideration to Olive ever since the return of the elder sister to America. The tragedy was not in any particular harm that Mrs. Luna could do her (for she did her good, rather, that is, she did her honour, by laughing at her), but in the spectacle itself, the drama, guided by the hand of fate, of which the small, ignoble scenes unrolled themselves so logically. The *dénouement* would of course be in keeping, and would consist simply of the spiritual death of Mrs. Luna, who would end by understanding no common speech of Olive's at all, and would sink into mere worldly plumpness, into the last complacency, the supreme imbecility, of petty, genteel conservatism. As for Newton, he would be more utterly odious, if possible, as he grew up, than he was already; in fact, he would not grow up at all, but only grow down, if his mother should continue her infatuated system with him. He was insufferably forward and selfish; under the pretext of keeping him, at any cost, refined, Adeline had coddled and caressed him, having him always in her petticoats, remitting his lessons when he pretended he had an earache, drawing him into the conversation, letting him answer her back, with an im-

pertinence beyond his years, when she administered the smallest check. The place for him, in Olive's eyes, was one of the public schools, where the children of the people would teach him his small importance, teach it, if necessary, by the aid of an occasional drubbing; and the two ladies had a grand discussion on this point before Mrs. Luna left Boston—a scene which ended in Adeline's clutching the irrepressible Newton to her bosom (he came in at the moment), and demanding of him a vow that he would live and die in the principles of his mother. Mrs. Luna declared that if she must be trampled upon—and very likely it was her fate!—she would rather be trampled upon by men than by women, and that if Olive and her friends should get possession of the government they would be worse despots than those who were celebrated in history. Newton took an infant oath that he would never be a destructive, impious radical, and Olive felt that after this she needn't trouble herself any more about her sister, whom she simply committed to her fate. That fate might very properly be to marry an enemy of her country, a man who, no doubt, desired to treat women with the lash and manacles, as he and his people had formerly treated the wretched coloured race. If she was so fond of the fine old institutions of the past, he would supply them to her in abundance; and if she wanted so much to be a conserva-

tive, she could try first how she liked being a conservative's wife. If Olive troubled herself little about Adeline, she troubled herself more about Basil Ransom; she said to herself that since he hated women who respected themselves (and each other), destiny would use him rightly in hanging a person like Adeline round his neck. That would be the way poetic justice ought to work, for him—and the law that our prejudices, when they act themselves out, punish us in doing so. Olive considered all this, as it was her effort to consider everything, from a very high point of view, and ended by feeling sure it was not for the sake of any nervous personal security that she desired to see her two relations in New York get mixed up together. If such an event as their marriage would gratify her sense of fitness, it would be simply as an illustration of certain laws. Olive, thanks to the philosophic cast of her mind, was exceedingly fond of illustrations of laws.

I hardly know, however, what illumination it was that sprang from her consciousness (now a source of considerable comfort), that Mrs. Farrinder was carrying the war into distant territories, and would return to Boston only in time to preside at a grand Female Convention, already advertised to take place in Boston in the month of June. It was agreeable to her that this imperial woman should be away; it made the field more free, the air more light; it

suggested an exemption from official criticism. I have not taken space to mention certain episodes of the more recent intercourse of these ladies, and must content myself with tracing them, lightly, in their consequences. These may be summed up in the remark, which will doubtless startle no one by its freshness, that two imperial women are scarcely more likely to hit it off together, as the phrase is, than two imperial men. Since that party at Miss Birdseye's, so important in its results for Olive, she had had occasion to approach Mrs. Farrinder more nearly, and those overtures brought forth the knowledge that the great leader of the feminine revolution was the one person (in that part of the world) more concentrated, more determined, than herself. Miss Chancellor's aspirations, of late, had been immensely quickened; she had begun to believe in herself to a livelier tune than she had ever listened to before; and she now perceived that when spirit meets spirit there must either be mutual absorption or a sharp concussion. It had long been familiar to her that she should have to count with the obstinacy of the world at large, but she now discovered that she should have to count also with certain elements in the feminine camp. This complicated the problem, and such a complication, naturally, could not make Mrs. Farrinder appear more easy to assimilate. If Olive's was a high nature and so was hers,

the fault was in neither; it was only an admonition that they were not needed as landmarks in the same part of the field. If such perceptions are delicate as between men, the reader need not be reminded of the exquisite form they may assume in natures more refined. So it was that Olive passed, in three months, from the stage of veneration to that of competition; and the process had been accelerated by the introduction of Verena into the fold. Mrs. Farrinder had behaved in the strangest way about Verena. First she had been struck with her, and then she hadn't; first she had seemed to want to take her in, then she had shied at her unmistakably—intimating to Olive that there were enough of that kind already. Of 'that kind' indeed! —the phrase reverberated in Miss Chancellor's resentful soul. Was it possible she didn't know the kind Verena was of, and with what vulgar aspirants to notoriety did she confound her? It had been Olive's original desire to obtain Mrs. Farrinder's stamp for her *protégée;* she wished her to hold a commission from the commander-in-chief. With this view the two young women had made more than one pilgrimage to Roxbury, and on one of these occasions the sibylline mood (in its most charming form) had descended upon Verena. She had fallen into it, naturally and gracefully, in the course of talk, and poured out a stream of eloquence even more touching than her regular

discourse at Miss Birdseye's. Mrs. Farrinder had taken it rather drily, and certainly it didn't resemble her own style of oratory, remarkable and cogent as this was. There had been considerable question of her writing a letter to the New York 'Tribune,' the effect of which should be to launch Miss Tarrant into renown; but this beneficent epistle never appeared, and now Olive saw that there was no favour to come from the prophetess of Roxbury. There had been primnesses, pruderies, small reserves, which ended by staying her pen. If Olive didn't say at once that she was jealous of Verena's more attractive manner, it was only because such a declaration was destined to produce more effect a little later. What she did say was that evidently Mrs. Farrinder wanted to keep the movement in her own hands—viewed with suspicion certain romantic, æsthetic elements which Olive and Verena seemed to be trying to introduce into it. They insisted so much, for instance, on the historic unhappiness of women; but Mrs. Farrinder didn't appear to care anything for that, or indeed to know much about history at all. She seemed to begin just to-day, and she demanded their rights for them whether they were unhappy or not. The upshot of this was that Olive threw herself on Verena's neck with a movement which was half indignation, half rapture; she exclaimed that they would have to fight the battle without human help, but,

after all, it was better so. If they were all in all to each other, what more could they want? They would be isolated, but they would be free; and this view of the situation brought with it a feeling that they had almost already begun to be a force. It was not, indeed, that Olive's resentment faded quite away; for not only had she the sense, doubtless very presumptuous, that Mrs. Farrinder was the only person thereabouts of a stature to judge her (a sufficient cause of antagonism in itself, for if we like to be praised by our betters we prefer that censure should come from the other sort), but the kind of opinion she had unexpectedly betrayed, after implying such esteem in the earlier phase of their intercourse, made Olive's cheeks occasionally flush. She prayed heaven that *she* might never become so personal, so narrow. She was frivolous, worldly, an amateur, a trifler, a frequenter of Beacon Street; her taking up Verena Tarrant was only a kind of elderly, ridiculous doll-dressing: this was the light in which Miss Chancellor had reason to believe that it now suited Mrs. Farrinder to regard her! It was fortunate, perhaps, that the misrepresentation was so gross; yet, none the less, tears of wrath rose more than once to Olive's eyes when she reflected that this particular wrong had been put upon her. Frivolous, worldly, Beacon Street! She appealed to Verena to share in her pledge that the world should know in due time how much of that

sort of thing there was about her. As I have already hinted, Verena at such moments quite rose to the occasion; she had private pangs at committing herself to give the cold shoulder to Beacon Street for ever; but she was now so completely in Olive's hands that there was no sacrifice to which she would not have consented in order to prove that her benefactress was not frivolous.

The matter of her coming to stay for so long in Charles Street was arranged during a visit that Selah Tarrant paid there at Miss Chancellor's request. This interview, which had some curious features, would be worth describing, but I am forbidden to do more than mention the most striking of these. Olive wished to have an understanding with him; wished the situation to be clear, so that, disagreeable as it would be to her to receive him, she sent him a summons for a certain hour—an hour at which she had planned that Verena should be out of the house. She withheld this incident from the girl's knowledge, reflecting with some solemnity that it was the first deception (for Olive her silence was a deception) that she had yet practised on her friend, and wondering whether she should have to practise others in the future. She then and there made up her mind that she would not shrink from others should they be necessary. She notified Tarrant that she should keep Verena a long time, and Tarrant remarked that it was

certainly very pleasant to see her so happily located. But he also intimated that he should like to know what Miss Chancellor laid out to do with her; and the tone of this suggestion made Olive feel how right she had been to foresee that their interview would have the stamp of business. It assumed that complexion very definitely when she crossed over to her desk and wrote Mr. Tarrant a cheque for a very considerable amount. 'Leave us alone —entirely alone—for a year, and then I will write you another:' it was with these words she handed him the little strip of paper that meant so much, feeling, as she did so, that surely Mrs. Farrinder herself could not be less amateurish than that. Selah looked at the cheque, at Miss Chancellor, at the cheque again, at the ceiling, at the floor, at the clock, and once more at his hostess; then the document disappeared beneath the folds of his waterproof, and she saw that he was putting it into some queer place on his queer person. 'Well, if I didn't believe you were going to help her to develop,' he remarked; and he stopped, while his hands continued to fumble, out of sight, and he treated Olive to his large joyless smile. She assured him that he need have no fear on that score; Verena's development was the thing in the world in which she took most interest; she should have every opportunity for a free expansion. 'Yes, that's the great thing,' Selah

said; 'it's more important than attracting a crowd. That's all we shall ask of you; let her act out her nature. Don't all the trouble of humanity come from our being pressed back? Don't shut down the cover, Miss Chancellor; just let her overflow!' And again Tarrant illuminated his inquiry, his metaphor, by the strange and silent lateral movement of his jaws. He added, presently, that he supposed he should have to fix it with Mis' Tarrant; but Olive made no answer to that; she only looked at him with a face in which she intended to express that there was nothing that need detain him longer. She knew it had been fixed with Mrs. Tarrant; she had been over all that with Verena, who had told her that her mother was willing to sacrifice her for her highest good. She had reason to know (not through Verena, of course), that Mrs. Tarrant had embraced, tenderly, the idea of a pecuniary compensation, and there was no fear of her making a scene when Tarrant should come back with a cheque in his pocket. 'Well, I trust she *may* develop, richly, and that you may accomplish what you desire; it seems as if we had only a little way to go further,' that worthy observed, as he erected himself for departure.

'It's not a little way; it's a very long way,' Olive replied, rather sternly.

Tarrant was on the threshold; he lingered a little, em-

barrassed by her grimness, for he himself had always inclined to rose-coloured views of progress, of the march of truth. He had never met any one so much in earnest as this definite, literal young woman, who had taken such an unhoped-for fancy to his daughter; whose longing for the new day had such perversities of pessimism, and who, in the midst of something that appeared to be terribly searching in her honesty, was willing to corrupt him, as a father, with the most extravagant orders on her bank. He hardly knew in what language to speak to her; it seemed as if there was nothing soothing enough, when a lady adopted that tone about a movement which was thought by some of the brightest to be so promising. 'Oh, well, I guess there's some kind of mysterious law . . .' he murmured, almost timidly; and so he passed from Miss Chancellor's sight.

XX.

She hoped she should not soon see him again, and there appeared to be no reason she should, if their intercourse was to be conducted by means of cheques. The understanding with Verena was, of course, complete; she had promised to stay with her friend as long as her friend should require it. She had said at first that she couldn't give up her mother, but she had been made to feel that there was no question of giving up. She should be as free as air, to go and come; she could spend hours and days with her mother, whenever Mrs. Tarrant required her attention; all that Olive asked of her was that, for the time, she should regard Charles Street as her home. There was no struggle about this, for the simple reason that by the time the question came to the front Verena was completely under the charm. The idea of Olive's charm will perhaps make the reader smile; but I use the word not in its derived, but in its literal sense. The fine web of authority, of dependence, that her strenuous companion had woven

about her, was now as dense as a suit of golden mail; and Verena was thoroughly interested in their great undertaking; she saw it in the light of an active, enthusiastic faith. The benefit that her father desired for her was now assured; she expanded, developed, on the most liberal scale. Olive saw the difference, and you may imagine how she rejoiced in it; she had never known a greater pleasure. Verena's former attitude had been girlish submission, grateful, curious sympathy. She had given herself, in her young, amused surprise, because Olive's stronger will and the incisive proceedings with which she pointed her purpose drew her on. Besides, she was held by hospitality, the vision of new social horizons, the sense of novelty, and the love of change. But now the girl was disinterestedly attached to the precious things they were to do together; she cared about them for themselves, believed in them ardently, had them constantly in mind. Her share in the union of the two young women was no longer passive, purely appreciative; it was passionate, too, and it put forth a beautiful energy. If Olive desired to get Verena into training, she could flatter herself that the process had already begun, and that her colleague enjoyed it almost as much as she. Therefore she could say to herself, without the imputation of heartlessness, that when she left her mother it was for a noble, a sacred use. In point of fact, she left her very little, and

she spent hours in jingling, aching, jostled journeys between Charles Street and the stale suburban cottage. Mrs. Tarrant sighed and grimaced, wrapped herself more than ever in her mantle, said she didn't know as she was fit to struggle alone, and that, half the time, if Verena was away, she wouldn't have the nerve to answer the door-bell; she was incapable, of course, of neglecting such an opportunity to posture as one who paid with her heart's blood for leading the van of human progress. But Verena had an inner sense (she judged her mother now, a little, for the first time), that she would be sorry to be taken at her word and that she felt safe enough in trusting to her daughter's generosity. She could not divest herself of the faith—even now that Mrs. Luna was gone, leaving no trace, and the gray walls of a sedentary winter were apparently closing about the two young women—she could not renounce the theory that a residence in Charles Street must at least produce some contact with the brilliant classes. She was vexed at her daughter's resignation to not going to parties and to Miss Chancellor's not giving them; but it was nothing new for her to have to practise patience, and she could feel, at least, that it was just as handy for Mr. Burrage to call on the child in town, where he spent half his time, sleeping constantly at Parker's.

It was a fact that this fortunate youth called very often,

and Verena saw him with Olive's full concurrence whenever she was at home. It had now been quite agreed between them that no artificial limits should be set to the famous phase; and Olive had, while it lasted, a sense of real heroism in steeling herself against uneasiness. It seemed to her, moreover, only justice that she should make some concession; if Verena made a great sacrifice of filial duty in coming to live with her (this, of course, should be permanent—she would buy off the Tarrants from year to year), she must not incur the imputation (the world would judge her, in that case, ferociously) of keeping her from forming common social ties. The friendship of a young man and a young woman was, according to the pure code of New England, a common social tie; and as the weeks elapsed Miss Chancellor saw no reason to repent of her temerity. Verena was not falling in love; she felt that she should know it, should guess it on the spot. Verena was fond of human intercourse; she was essentially a sociable creature; she liked to shine and smile and talk and listen; and so far as Henry Burrage was concerned he introduced an element of easy and convenient relaxation into a life now a good deal stiffened (Olive was perfectly willing to own it) by great civic purposes. But the girl was being saved, without interference, by the simple operation of her interest in those very designs. From this time there was no need

of putting pressure on her; her own springs were working; the fire with which she glowed came from within. Sacredly, brightly single she would remain; her only espousals would be at the altar of a great cause. Olive always absented herself when Mr. Burrage was announced; and when Verena afterwards attempted to give some account of his conversation she checked her, said she would rather know nothing about it—all with a very solemn mildness; this made her feel very superior, truly noble. She knew by this time (I scarcely can tell how, since Verena could give her no report), exactly what sort of a youth Mr. Burrage was: he was weakly pretentious, softly original, cultivated eccentricity, patronised progress, liked to have mysteries, sudden appointments to keep, anonymous persons to visit, the air of leading a double life, of being devoted to a girl whom people didn't know, or at least didn't meet. Of course he liked to make an impression on Verena; but what he mainly liked was to play her off upon the other girls, the daughters of fashion, with whom he danced at Papanti's. Such were the images that proceeded from Olive's rich moral consciousness. 'Well, he *is* greatly interested in our movement:' so much Verena once managed to announce; but the words rather irritated Miss Chancellor, who, as we know, did not care to allow for accidental exceptions in the great masculine conspiracy.

In the month of March Verena told her that Mr. Burrage was offering matrimony—offering it with much insistence, begging that she would at least wait and think of it before giving him a final answer. Verena was evidently very glad to be able to say to Olive that she had assured him she couldn't think of it, and that if he expected this he had better not come any more. He continued to come, and it was therefore to he supposed that he had ceased to count on such a concession; it was now Olive's opinion that he really didn't desire it. She had a theory that he proposed to almost any girl who was not likely to accept him—did it because he was making a collection of such episodes—a mental album of declarations, blushes, hesitations, refusals that just missed imposing themselves as acceptances, quite as he collected enamels and Cremona violins. He would be very sorry indeed to ally himself to the house of Tarrant; but such a fear didn't prevent him from holding it becoming in a man of taste to give that encouragement to low-born girls who were pretty, for one looked out for the special cases in which, for reasons (even the lowest might have reasons), they wouldn't 'rise.' 'I told you I wouldn't marry him, and I won't,' Verena said, delightedly, to her friend; her tone suggested that a certain credit belonged to her for the way she carried out her assurance. 'I never thought you would, if you didn't want to,' Olive replied to

this; and Verena could have no rejoinder but the good-humour that sat in her eyes, unable as she was to say that she had wanted to. They had a little discussion, however, when she intimated that she pitied him for his discomfiture, Olive's contention being that, selfish, conceited, pampered and insincere, he might properly be left now to digest his affront. Miss Chancellor felt none of the remorse now that she would have felt six months before at standing in the way of such a chance for Verena, and she would have been very angry if any one had asked her if she were not afraid of taking too much upon herself. She would have said, moreover, that she stood in no one's way, and that even if she were not there Verena would never think seriously of a frivolous little man who fiddled while Rome was burning. This did not prevent Olive from making up her mind that they had better go to Europe in the spring; a year's residence in that quarter of the globe would be highly agreeable to Verena, and might even contribute to the evolution of her genius. It cost Miss Chancellor an effort to admit that any virtue still lingered in the elder world, and that it could have any important lesson for two such good Americans as her friend and herself; but it suited her just then to make this assumption, which was not altogether sincere. It was recommended by the idea that it would get her companion out of the way—out of the

way of officious fellow-citizens—till she should be absolutely firm on her feet, and would also give greater intensity to their own long conversation. On that continent of strangers they would cleave more closely still to each other. This, of course, would be to fly before the inevitable 'phase,' much more than to face it; but Olive decided that if they should reach unscathed the term of their delay (the first of July) she should have faced it as much as either justice or generosity demanded. I may as well say at once that she traversed most of this period without further serious alarms and with a great many little thrills of bliss and hope.

Nothing happened to dissipate the good omens with which her partnership with Verena Tarrant was at present surrounded. They threw themselves into study; they had innumerable big books from the Athenæum, and consumed the midnight oil. Henry Burrage, after Verena had shaken her head at him so sweetly and sadly, returned to New York, giving no sign; they only heard that he had taken refuge under the ruffled maternal wing. (Olive, at least, took for granted the wing was ruffled; she could fancy how Mrs. Burrage would be affected by the knowledge that her son had been refused by the daughter of a mesmeric healer. She would be almost as angry as if she had learnt that he had been accepted.) Matthias Pardon had not yet taken

his revenge in the newspapers; he was perhaps nursing his thunderbolts; at any rate, now that the operatic season had begun, he was much occupied in interviewing the principal singers, one of whom he described in one of the leading journals (Olive, at least, was sure it was only he who could write like that), as 'a dear little woman with baby dimples and kittenish movements.' The Tarrants were apparently given up to a measure of sensual ease with which they had not hitherto been familiar, thanks to the increase of income that they drew from their eccentric protectress. Mrs. Tarrant now enjoyed the ministrations of a 'girl'; it was partly her pride (at any rate, she chose to give it this turn), that her house had for many years been conducted without the element—so debasing on both sides—of servile, mercenary labour. She wrote to Olive (she was perpetually writing to her now, but Olive never answered), that she was conscious of having fallen to a lower plane, but she admitted that it was a prop to her wasted spirit to have some one to converse with when Selah was off. Verena, of course, perceived the difference, which was inadequately explained by the theory of a sudden increase of her father's practice (nothing of her father's had ever increased like that), and ended by guessing the cause of it—a discovery which did not in the least disturb her equanimity. She accepted the idea that her parents should

receive a pecuniary tribute from the extraordinary friend whom she had encountered on the threshold of womanhood, just as she herself accepted that friend's irresistible hospitality. She had no worldly pride, no traditions of independence, no ideas of what was done and what was not done; but there was only one thing that equalled this perfectly gentle and natural insensibility to favours—namely, the inveteracy of her habit of not asking them. Olive had had an apprehension that she would flush a little at learning the terms on which they should now be able to pursue their career together; but Verena never changed colour; it was either not new or not disagreeable to her that the authors of her being should be bought off, silenced by money, treated as the troublesome of the lower orders are treated when they are not locked up; so that her friend had a perception, after this, that it would probably be impossible in any way ever to offend her. She was too rancourless, too detached from conventional standards, too free from private self-reference. It was too much to say of her that she forgave injuries, since she was not conscious of them; there was in forgiveness a certain arrogance of which she was incapable, and her bright mildness glided over the many traps that life sets for our consistency. Olive had always held that pride was necessary to character, but there was no peculiarity of Verena's that could make her spirit

seem less pure. The added luxuries in the little house at Cambridge, which even with their help was still such a penal settlement, made her feel afresh that before she came to the rescue the daughter of that house had traversed a desert of sordid misery. She had cooked and washed and swept and stitched; she had worked harder than any of Miss Chancellor's servants. These things had left no trace upon her person or her mind; everything fresh and fair renewed itself in her with extraordinary facility, everything ugly and tiresome evaporated as soon as it touched her; but Olive deemed that, being what she was, she had a right to immense compensations. In the future she should have exceeding luxury and ease, and Miss Chancellor had no difficulty in persuading herself that persons doing the high intellectual and moral work to which the two young ladies in Charles Street were now committed owed it to themselves, owed it to the groaning sisterhood, to cultivate the best material conditions. She herself was nothing of a sybarite, and she had proved, visiting the alleys and slums of Boston in the service of the Associated Charities, that there was no foulness of disease or misery she feared to look in the face; but her house had always been thoroughly well regulated, she was passionately clean, and she was an excellent woman of business. Now, however, she elevated daintiness to a religion; her interior shone with superfluous

friction, with punctuality, with winter roses. Among these soft influences Verena herself bloomed like the flower that attains such perfection in Boston. Olive had always rated high the native refinement of her countrywomen, their latent 'adaptability,' their talent for accommodating themselves at a glance to changed conditions; but the way her companion rose with the level of the civilisation that surrounded her, the way she assimilated all delicacies and absorbed all traditions, left this friendly theory halting behind. The winter days were still, indoors, in Charles Street, and the winter nights secure from interruption. Our two young women had plenty of duties, but Olive had never favoured the custom of running in and out. Much conference on social and reformatory topics went forward under her roof, and she received her colleagues—she belonged to twenty associations and committees—only at preappointed hours, which she expected them to observe rigidly. Verena's share in these proceedings was not active; she hovered over them, smiling, listening, dropping occasionally a fanciful though never an idle word, like some gently animated image placed there for good omen. It was understood that her part was before the scenes, not behind; that she was not a prompter, but (potentially, at least) a 'popular favourite,' and that the work over which Miss Chancellor presided so efficiently was a general preparation of the

platform on which, later, her companion would execute the most striking steps.

The western windows of Olive's drawing-room, looking over the water, took in the red sunsets of winter; the long, low bridge that crawled, on its staggering posts, across the Charles; the casual patches of ice and snow; the desolate suburban horizons, peeled and made bald by the rigour of the season; the general hard, cold void of the prospect; the extrusion, at Charlestown, at Cambridge, of a few chimneys and steeples, straight, sordid tubes of factories and engine-shops, or spare, heavenward finger of the New England meeting-house. There was something inexorable in the poverty of the scene, shameful in the meanness of its details, which gave a collective impression of boards and tin and frozen earth, sheds and rotting piles, railway-lines striding flat across a thoroughfare of puddles, and tracks of the humbler, the universal horse-car, traversing obliquely this path of danger; loose fences, vacant lots, mounds of refuse, yards bestrewn with iron pipes, telegraph poles, and bare wooden backs of places. Verena thought such a view lovely, and she was by no means without excuse when, as the afternoon closed, the ugly picture was tinted with a clear, cold rosiness. The air, in its windless chill, seemed to tinkle like a crystal, the faintest gradations of tone were perceptible in the sky, the west became deep

and delicate, everything grew doubly distinct before taking on the dimness of evening. There were pink flushes on snow, 'tender' reflections in patches of stiffened marsh, sounds of car-bells, no longer vulgar, but almost silvery, on the long bridge, lonely outlines of distant dusky undulations against the fading glow. These agreeable effects used to light up that end of the drawing-room, and Olive often sat at the window with her companion before it was time for the lamp. They admired the sunsets, they rejoiced in the ruddy spots projected upon the parlour-wall, they followed the darkening perspective in fanciful excursions. They watched the stellar points come out at last in a colder heaven, and then, shuddering a little, arm in arm, they turned away, with a sense that the winter night was even more cruel than the tyranny of men—turned back to drawn curtains and a brighter fire and a glittering tea-tray and more and more talk about the long martyrdom of women, a subject as to which Olive was inexhaustible and really most interesting. There were some nights of deep snow-fall, when Charles Street was white and muffled and the door-bell foredoomed to silence, which seemed little islands of lamplight, of enlarged and intensified vision. They read a great deal of history together, and read it ever with the same thought—that of finding confirmation in it for this idea that their sex had suffered inexpressibly, and that at

any moment in the course of human affairs the state of the world would have been so much less horrible (history seemed to them in every way horrible), if women had been able to press down the scale. Verena was full of suggestions which stimulated discussions; it was she, oftenest, who kept in view the fact that a good many women in the past had been intrusted with power and had not always used it amiably, who brought up the wicked queens, the profligate mistresses of kings. These ladies were easily disposed of between the two, and the public crimes of Bloody Mary, the private misdemeanours of Faustina, wife of the pure Marcus Aurelius, were very satisfactorily classified. If the influence of women in the past accounted for every act of virtue that men had happened to achieve, it only made the matter balance properly that the influence of men should explain the casual irregularities of the other sex. Olive could see how few books had passed through Verena's hands, and how little the home of the Tarrants had been a house of reading; but the girl now traversed the fields of literature with her characteristic lightness of step. Everything she turned to or took up became an illustration of the facility, the 'giftedness,' which Olive, who had so little of it, never ceased to wonder at and prize. Nothing frightened her; she always smiled at it, she could do anything she tried. As she knew how to do other

things, she knew how to study; she read quickly and remembered infallibly; could repeat, days afterward, passages that she appeared only to have glanced at. Olive, of course, was more and more happy to think that their cause should have the services of an organisation so rare.

All this doubtless sounds rather dry, and I hasten to add that our friends were not always shut up in Miss Chancellor's strenuous parlour. In spite of Olive's desire to keep her precious inmate to herself and to bend her attention upon their common studies, in spite of her constantly reminding Verena that this winter was to be purely educative and that the platitudes of the satisfied and unregenerate would have little to teach her, in spite, in short, of the severe and constant duality of our young women, it must not be supposed that their life had not many personal confluents and tributaries. Individual and original as Miss Chancellor was universally acknowledged to be, she was yet a typical Bostonian, and as a typical Bostonian she could not fail to belong in some degree to a 'set.' It had been said of her that she was in it but not of it; but she was of it enough to go occasionally into other houses and to receive their occupants in her own. It was her belief that she filled her tea-pot with the spoon of hospitality, and made a good many select spirits feel that they were welcome under her roof at convenient hours. She had a preference

for what she called *real* people, and there were several whose reality she had tested by arts known to herself. This little society was rather suburban and miscellaneous; it was prolific in ladies who trotted about, early and late, with books from the Athenæum nursed behind their muff, or little nosegays of exquisite flowers that they were carrying as presents to each other. Verena, who, when Olive was not with her, indulged in a good deal of desultory contemplation at the window, saw them pass the house in Charles Street, always apparently straining a little, as if they might be too late for something. At almost any time, for she envied their preoccupation, she would have taken the chance with them. Very often, when she described them to her mother, Mrs. Tarrant didn't know who they were; there were even days (she had so many discouragements) when it seemed as if she didn't want to know. So long as they were not some one else, it seemed to be no use that they were themselves; whoever they were, they were sure to have that defect. Even after all her mother's disquisitions Verena had but vague ideas as to whom she would have liked them to be; and it was only when the girl talked of the concerts, to all of which Olive subscribed and conducted her inseparable friend, that Mrs. Tarrant appeared to feel in any degree that her daughter was living up to the standard formed for her in their Cambridge home.

As all the world knows, the opportunities in Boston for hearing good music are numerous and excellent, and it had long been Miss Chancellor's practice to cultivate the best. She went in, as the phrase is, for the superior programmes, and that high, dim, dignified Music Hall, which has echoed in its time to so much eloquence and so much melody, and of which the very proportions and colour seem to teach respect and attention, shed the protection of its illuminated cornice, this winter, upon no faces more intelligently upturned than those of the young women for whom Bach and Beethoven only repeated, in a myriad forms, the idea that was always with them. Symphonies and fugues only stimulated their convictions, excited their revolutionary passion, led their imagination further in the direction in which it was always pressing. It lifted them to immeasurable heights; and as they sat looking at the great florid, sombre organ, overhanging the bronze statue of Beethoven, they felt that this was the only temple in which the votaries of their creed could worship.

And yet their music was not their greatest joy, for they had two others which they cultivated at least as zealously. One of these was simply the society of old Miss Birdseye, of whom Olive saw more this winter than she had ever seen before. It had become apparent that her long and beauti-

ful career was drawing to a close, her earnest, unremitting work was over, her old-fashioned weapons were broken and dull. Olive would have liked to hang them up as venerable relics of a patient fight, and this was what she seemed to do when she made the poor lady relate her battles—never glorious and brilliant, but obscure and wastefully heroic—call back the figures of her companions in arms, exhibit her medals and scars. Miss Birdseye knew that her uses were ended; she might pretend still to go about the business of unpopular causes, might fumble for papers in her immemorial satchel and think she had important appointments, might sign petitions, attend conventions, say to Doctor Prance that if she would only make her sleep she should live to see a great many improvements yet; she ached and was weary, growing almost as glad to look back (a great anomaly for Miss Birdseye) as to look forward. She let herself be coddled now by her friends of the new generation; there were days when she seemed to want nothing better than to sit by Olive's fire and ramble on about the old struggles, with a vague, comfortable sense—no physical rapture of Miss Birdseye's could be very acute—of immunity from wet feet, from the draughts that prevail at thin meetings, of independence of street-cars that would probably arrive overflowing; and also a pleased perception, not that she was an example to these fresh lives which began with

more advantages than hers, but that she was in some degree an encouragement, as she helped them to measure the way the new truths had advanced—being able to tell them of such a different state of things when she was a young lady, the daughter of a very talented teacher (indeed her mother had been a teacher too), down in Connecticut. She had always had for Olive a kind of aroma of martyrdom, and her battered, unremunerated, unpensioned old age brought angry tears, springing from depths of outraged theory, into Miss Chancellor's eyes. For Verena, too, she was a picturesque humanitary figure. Verena had been in the habit of meeting martyrs from her childhood up, but she had seen none with so many reminiscences as Miss Birdseye, or who had been so nearly scorched by penal fires. She had had escapes, in the early days of abolitionism, which it was a marvel she could tell with so little implication that she had shown courage. She had roamed through certain parts of the South, carrying the Bible to the slave; and more than one of her companions, in the course of these expeditions, had been tarred and feathered. She herself, at one season, had spent a month in a Georgian jail. She had preached temperance in Irish circles where the doctrine was received with missiles; she had interfered between wives and husbands mad with drink; she had taken filthy children, picked up in the street, to her own

poor rooms, and had removed their pestilent rags and washed their sore bodies with slippery little hands. In her own person she appeared to Olive and Verena a representative of suffering humanity; the pity they felt for her was part of their pity for all who were weakest and most hardly used; and it struck Miss Chancellor (more especially) that this frumpy little missionary was the last link in a tradition, and that when she should be called away the heroic age of New England life—the age of plain living and high thinking, of pure ideals and earnest effort, of moral passion and noble experiment—would effectually be closed. It was the perennial freshness of Miss Birdseye's faith that had had such a contagion for these modern maidens, the unquenched flame of her transcendentalism, the simplicity of her vision, the way in which, in spite of mistakes, deceptions, the changing fashions of reform, which make the remedies of a previous generation look as ridiculous as their bonnets, the only thing that was still actual for her was the elevation of the species by the reading of Emerson and the frequentation of Tremont Temple. Olive had been active enough, for years, in the city-missions; she too had scoured dirty children, and, in squalid lodging-houses, had gone into rooms where the domestic situation was strained and the noises made the neighbours turn pale. But she reflected that after such exertions she had the refreshment of a pretty

house, a drawing-room full of flowers, a crackling hearth, where she threw in pine-cones and made them snap, an imported tea-service, a Chickering piano, and the *Deutsche Rundschau;* whereas Miss Birdseye had only a bare, vulgar room, with a hideous flowered carpet (it looked like a dentist's), a cold furnace, the evening-paper, and Doctor Prance. Olive and Verena were present at another of her gatherings before the winter ended; it resembled the occasion that we described at the beginning of this history, with the difference that Mrs. Farrinder was not there to oppress the company with her greatness, and that Verena made a speech without the co-operation of her father. This young lady had delivered herself with even finer effect than before, and Olive could see how much she had gained, in confidence and range of allusion, since the educative process in Charles Street began. Her *motif* was now a kind of unprepared tribute to Miss Birdseye, the fruit of the occasion and of the unanimous tenderness of the younger members of the circle, which made her a willing mouthpiece. She pictured her laborious career, her early associates (Eliza P. Moseley was not neglected as Verena passed), her difficulties and dangers and triumphs, her humanising effect upon so many, her serene and honoured old age—expressed, in short, as one of the ladies said, just the very way they all felt about her. Verena's face

brightened and grew triumphant as she spoke, but she brought tears into the eyes of most of the others. It was Olive's opinion that nothing could be more graceful and touching, and she saw that the impression made was now deeper than on the former evening. Miss Birdseye went about with her eighty years of innocence, her undiscriminating spectacles, asking her friends if it wasn't perfectly splendid; she took none of it to herself, she regarded it only as a brilliant expression of Verena's gift. Olive thought, afterwards, that if a collection could only be taken up on the spot, the good lady would be made easy for the rest of her days; then she remembered that most of her guests were as impecunious as herself.

I have intimated that our young friends had a source of fortifying emotion which was distinct from the hours they spent with Beethoven and Bach, or in hearing Miss Birdseye describe Concord as it used to be. This consisted in the wonderful insight they had obtained into the history of feminine anguish. They perused that chapter perpetually and zealously, and they derived from it the purest part of their mission. Olive had pored over it so long, so earnestly, that she was now in complete possession of the subject; it was the one thing in life which she felt she had really mastered. She was able to exhibit it to Verena with

the greatest authority and accuracy, to lead her up and down, in and out, through all the darkest and most tortuous passages. We know that she was without belief in her own eloquence, but she was very eloquent when she reminded Verena how the exquisite weakness of women had never been their defence, but had only exposed them to sufferings more acute than masculine grossness can conceive. Their odious partner had trampled upon them from the beginning of time, and their tenderness, their abnegation, had been his opportunity. All the bullied wives, the stricken mothers, the dishonoured, deserted maidens who have lived on the earth and longed to leave it, passed and repassed before her eyes, and the interminable dim procession seemed to stretch out a myriad hands to her. She sat with them at their trembling vigils, listened for the tread, the voice, at which they grew pale and sick, walked with them by the dark waters that offered to wash away misery and shame, took with them, even, when the vision grew intense, the last shuddering leap. She had analysed to an extraordinary fineness their susceptibility, their softness; she knew (or she thought she knew) all the possible tortures of anxiety, of suspense and dread; and she had made up her mind that it was women, in the end, who had paid for everything. In the last resort the whole burden of the human lot came upon them; it pressed upon them

far more than on the others, the intolerable load of fate. It was they who sat cramped and chained to receive it; it was they who had done all the waiting and taken all the wounds. The sacrifices, the blood, the tears, the terrors were theirs. Their organism was in itself a challenge to suffering, and men had practised upon it with an impudence that knew no bounds. As they were the weakest most had been wrung from them, and as they were the most generous they had been most deceived. Olive Chancellor would have rested her case, had it been necessary, on those general facts; and her simple and comprehensive contention was that the peculiar wretchedness which had been the very essence of the feminine lot was a monstrous artificial imposition, crying aloud for redress. She was willing to admit that women, too, could be bad; that there were many about the world who were false, immoral, vile. But their errors were as nothing to their sufferings; they had expiated, in advance, an eternity, if need be, of misconduct. Olive poured forth these views to her listening and responsive friend; she presented them again and again, and there was no light in which they did not seem to palpitate with truth. Verena was immensely wrought upon; a subtle fire passed into her; she was not so hungry for revenge as Olive, but at the last, before they went to Europe (I shall take no place to describe the manner in which she threw

herself into that project), she quite agreed with her companion that after so many ages of wrong (it would also be after the European journey) men must take *their* turn, men must pay!

XXI.

BASIL RANSOM lived in New York, rather far to the eastward, and in the upper reaches of the town; he occupied two small shabby rooms in a somewhat decayed mansion which stood next to the corner of the Second Avenue. The corner itself was formed by a considerable grocer's shop, the near neighbourhood of which was fatal to any pretensions Ransom and his fellow-lodgers might have had in regard to gentility of situation. The house had a red, rusty face, and faded green shutters, of which the slats were limp and at variance with each other. In one of the lower windows was suspended a fly-blown card, with the words 'Table Board' affixed in letters cut (not very neatly) out of coloured paper, of graduated tints, and surrounded with a small band of stamped gilt. The two sides of the shop were protected by an immense pent-house shed, which projected over a greasy pavement and was supported by wooden posts fixed in the curbstone. Beneath it, on the dislocated flags, barrels and baskets were freely and picturesquely

grouped; an open cellarway yawned beneath the feet of those who might pause to gaze too fondly on the savoury wares displayed in the window; a strong odour of smoked fish, combined with a fragrance of molasses, hung about the spot; the pavement, toward the gutters, was fringed with dirty panniers, heaped with potatoes, carrots, and onions; and a smart, bright waggon, with the horse detached from the shafts, drawn up on the edge of the abominable road (it contained holes and ruts a foot deep, and immemorial accumulations of stagnant mud), imparted an idle, rural, pastoral air to a scene otherwise perhaps expressive of a rank civilisation. The establishment was of the kind known to New Yorkers as a Dutch grocery; and red-faced, yellow-haired, bare-armed vendors might have been observed to lounge in the doorway. I mention it not on account of any particular influence it may have had on the life or the thoughts of Basil Ransom, but for old acquaintance sake and that of local colour; besides which, a figure is nothing without a setting, and our young man came and went every day, with rather an indifferent, unperceiving step, it is true, among the objects I have briefly designated. One of his rooms was directly above the street-door of the house; such a dormitory, when it is so exiguous, is called in the nomenclature of New York a 'hall bedroom.' The sitting-room, beside it, was slightly larger, and they both

commanded a row of tenements no less degenerate than Ransom's own habitation—houses built forty years before, and already sere and superannuated. These were also painted red, and the bricks were accentuated by a white line; they were garnished, on the first floor, with balconies covered with small tin roofs, striped in different colours, and with an elaborate iron lattice-work, which gave them a repressive, cage-like appearance, and caused them slightly to resemble the little boxes for peeping unseen into the street, which are a feature of oriental towns. Such posts of observation commanded a view of the grocery on the corner, of the relaxed and disjointed roadway, enlivened at the curbstone with an occasional ash-barrel or with gas-lamps drooping from the perpendicular, and westward, at the end of the truncated vista, of the fantastic skeleton of the Elevated Railway, overhanging the transverse longitudinal street, which it darkened and smothered with the immeasurable spinal column and myriad clutching paws of an antediluvian monster. If the opportunity were not denied me here, I should like to give some account of Basil Ransom's interior, of certain curious persons of both sexes, for the most part not favourites of fortune, who had found an obscure asylum there; some picture of the crumpled little *table d'hôte*, at two dollars and a half a week, where everything felt sticky, which went forward in the low-ceiled basement, under the

conduct of a couple of shuffling negresses, who mingled in the conversation and indulged in low, mysterious chuckles when it took a facetious turn. But we need, in strictness, concern ourselves with it no further than to gather the implication that the young Mississippian, even a year and a half after that momentous visit of his to Boston, had not made his profession very lucrative.

He had been diligent, he had been ambitious, but he had not yet been successful. During the few weeks preceding the moment at which we meet him again, he had even begun to lose faith altogether in his earthly destiny. It became much of a question with him whether success in any form was written there; whether for a hungry young Mississippian, without means, without friends, wanting, too, in the highest energy, the wisdom of the serpent, personal arts and national prestige, the game of life was to be won in New York. He had been on the point of giving it up and returning to the home of his ancestors, where, as he heard from his mother, there was still just a sufficient supply of hot corn-cake to support existence. He had never believed much in his luck, but during the last year it had been guilty of aberrations surprising even to a constant, an imperturbable, victim of fate. Not only had he not extended his connection, but he had lost most of the little business which was an object of complacency to him a twelvemonth

before. He had had none but small jobs, and he had made a mess of more than one of them. Such accidents had not had a happy effect upon his reputation; he had been able to perceive that this fair flower may be nipped when it is so tender a bud as scarcely to be palpable. He had formed a partnership with a person who seemed likely to repair some of his deficiencies—a young man from Rhode Island, acquainted, according to his own expression, with the inside track. But this gentleman himself, as it turned out, would have been better for a good deal of remodelling, and Ransom's principal deficiency, which was, after all, that of cash, was not less apparent to him after his colleague, prior to a sudden and unexplained departure for Europe, had drawn the slender accumulations of the firm out of the bank. Ransom sat for hours in his office, waiting for clients who either did not come, or, if they did come, did not seem to find him encouraging, as they usually left him with the remark that they would think what they would do. They thought to little purpose, and seldom reappeared, so that at last he began to wonder whether there were not a prejudice against his Southern complexion. Perhaps they didn't like the way he spoke. If they could show him a better way, he was willing to adopt it; but the manner of New York could not be acquired by precept, and example, somehow, was not in this case contagious. He wondered whether he were

stupid and unskilled, and he was finally obliged to confess to himself that he was unpractical.

This confession was in itself a proof of the fact, for nothing could be less fruitful than such a speculation, terminating in such a way. He was perfectly aware that he cared a great deal for the theory, and so his visitors must have thought when they found him, with one of his long legs twisted round the other, reading a volume of De Tocqueville. That was the kind of reading he liked; he had thought a great deal about social and economical questions, forms of government and the happiness of peoples. The convictions he had arrived at were not such as mix gracefully with the time-honoured verities a young lawyer looking out for business is in the habit of taking for granted; but he had to reflect that these doctrines would probably not contribute any more to his prosperity in Mississippi than in New York. Indeed, he scarcely could think of the country where they would be a particular advantage to him. It came home to him that his opinions were stiff, whereas in comparison his effort was lax; and he accordingly began to wonder whether he might not make a living by his opinions. He had always had a desire for public life; to cause one's ideas to be embodied in national conduct appeared to him the highest form of human enjoyment. But there was little enough that was public in his solitary

studies, and he asked himself what was the use of his having an office at all, and why he might not as well carry on his profession at the Astor Library, where, in his spare hours and on chance holidays, he did an immense deal of suggestive reading. He took copious notes and memoranda, and these things sometimes shaped themselves in a way that might possibly commend them to the editors of periodicals. Readers perhaps would come, if clients didn't; so he produced, with a great deal of labour, half a dozen articles, from which, when they were finished, it seemed to him that he had omitted all the points he wished most to make, and addressed them to the powers that preside over weekly and monthly publications. They were all declined with thanks, and he would have been forced to believe that the accent of his languid clime brought him luck as little under the pen as on the lips, had not another explanation been suggested by one of the more explicit of his oracles, in relation to a paper on the rights of minorities. This gentleman pointed out that his doctrines were about three hundred years behind the age; doubtless some magazine of the sixteenth century would have been very happy to print them. This threw light on his own suspicion that he was attached to causes that could only, in the nature of things, be unpopular. The disagreeable editor was right about his being out of date, only he had got the time wrong.

He had come centuries too soon; he was not too old, but too new. Such an impression, however, would not have prevented him from going into politics, if there had been any other way to represent constituencies than by being elected. People might be found eccentric enough to vote for him in Mississippi, but meanwhile where should he find the twenty-dollar greenbacks which it was his ambition to transmit from time to time to his female relations, confined so constantly to a farinaceous diet? It came over him with some force that his opinions would not yield interest, and the evaporation of this pleasing hypothesis made him feel like a man in an open boat, at sea, who should just have parted with his last rag of canvas.

I shall not attempt a complete description of Ransom's ill-starred views, being convinced that the reader will guess them as he goes, for they had a frolicsome, ingenious way of peeping out of the young man's conversation. I shall do them sufficient justice in saying that he was by natural disposition a good deal of a stoic, and that, as the result of a considerable intellectual experience, he was, in social and political matters, a reactionary. I suppose he was very conceited, for he was much addicted to judging his age. He thought it talkative, querulous, hysterical, maudlin, full of false ideas, of unhealthy germs, of extravagant, dissipated habits, for which a great reckoning was in store. He was

an immense admirer of the late Thomas Carlyle, and was very suspicious of the encroachments of modern democracy. I know not exactly how these queer heresies had planted themselves, but he had a longish pedigree (it had flowered at one time with English royalists and cavaliers), and he seemed at moments to be inhabited by some transmitted spirit of a robust but narrow ancestor, some broad-faced wig-wearer or sword-bearer, with a more primitive conception of manhood than our modern temperament appears to require, and a programme of human felicity much less varied. He liked his pedigree, he revered his forefathers, and he rather pitied those who might come after him. In saying so, however, I betray him a little, for he never mentioned such feelings as these. Though he thought the age too talkative, as I have hinted, he liked to talk as well as any one; but he could hold his tongue, if that were more expressive, and he usually did so when his perplexities were greatest. He had been sitting for several evenings in a beer-cellar, smoking his pipe with a profundity of reticence. This attitude was so unbroken that it marked a crisis—the complete, the acute consciousness of his personal situation. It was the cheapest way he knew of spending an evening. At this particular establishment the *Schoppen* were very tall and the beer was very good; and as the host and most of the guests were German, and their colloquial tongue was

unknown to him, he was not drawn into any undue expenditure of speech. He watched his smoke and he thought, thought so hard that at last he appeared to himself to have exhausted the thinkable. When this moment of combined relief and dismay arrived (on the last of the evenings that we are concerned with), he took his way down Third Avenue and reached his humble dwelling. Till within a short time there had been a resource for him at such an hour and in such a mood; a little variety-actress, who lived in the house, and with whom he had established the most cordial relations, was often having her supper (she took it somewhere, every night, after the theatre), in the dim, close dining-room, and he used to drop in and talk to her. But she had lately married, to his great amusement, and her husband had taken her on a wedding-tour, which was to be at the same time professional. On this occasion he mounted, with rather a heavy tread, to his rooms, where (on the rickety writing-table in the parlour) he found a note from Mrs. Luna. I need not reproduce it *in extenso;* a pale reflection of it will serve. She reproached him with neglecting her, wanted to know what had become of him, whether he had grown too fashionable for a person who cared only for serious society. She accused him of having changed, and inquired as to the reason of his coldness. Was it too much to ask whether he could tell her at least

in what manner she had offended him? She used to think they were so much in sympathy—he expressed her own ideas about everything so vividly. She liked intellectual companionship, and she had none now. She hoped very much he would come and see her—as he used to do six months before—the following evening; and however much she might have sinned or he might have altered, she was at least always his affectionate cousin Adeline.

'What the deuce does she want of me now?' It was with this somewhat ungracious exclamation that he tossed away his cousin Adeline's missive. The gesture might have indicated that he meant to take no notice of her; nevertheless, after a day had elapsed, he presented himself before her. He knew what she wanted of old—that is, a year ago; she had wanted him to look after her property and to be tutor to her son. He had lent himself, good-naturedly, to this desire—he was touched by so much confidence—but the experiment had speedily collapsed. Mrs. Luna's affairs were in the hands of trustees, who had complete care of them, and Ransom instantly perceived that his function would be simply to meddle in things that didn't concern him. The levity with which she had exposed him to the derision of the lawful guardians of her fortune opened his eyes to some of the dangers of cousinship; nevertheless he said to himself that he might turn an honest penny by

giving an hour or two every day to the education of he little boy. But this, too, proved a brief illusion. Ransom had to find his time in the afternoon; he left his business at five o'clock and remained with his young kinsman till the hour of dinner. At the end of a few weeks he thought himself lucky in retiring without broken shins. That Newton's little nature was remarkable had often been insisted on by his mother; but it was remarkable, Ransom saw, for the absence of any of the qualities which attach a teacher to a pupil. He was in truth an insufferable child, entertaining for the Latin language a personal, physical hostility, which expressed itself in convulsions of rage. During these paroxysms he kicked furiously at every one and everything —at poor 'Rannie,' at his mother, at Messrs. Andrews and Stoddard, at the illustrious men of Rome, at the universe in general, to which, as he lay on his back on the carpet, he presented a pair of singularly active little heels. Mrs. Luna had a way of being present at his lessons, and when they passed, as sooner or later they were sure to, into the stage I have described, she interceded for her overwrought darling, reminded Ransom that these were the signs of an exquisite sensibility, begged that the child might be allowed to rest a little, and spent the remainder of the time in conversation with the preceptor. It came to seem to him, very soon, that he was not earning his fee; besides which,

it was disagreeable to him to have pecuniary relations with a lady who had not the art of concealing from him that she liked to place him under obligations. He resigned his tutorship, and drew a long breath, having a vague feeling that he had escaped a danger. He could not have told you exactly what it was, and he had a certain sentimental, provincial respect for women which even prevented him from attempting to give a name to it in his own thoughts. He was addicted with the ladies to the old forms of address and of gallantry; he held that they were delicate, agreeable creatures, whom Providence had placed under the protection of the bearded sex; and it was not merely a humorous idea with him that whatever might be the defects of Southern gentlemen, they were at any rate remarkable for their chivalry. He was a man who still, in a slangy age, could pronounce that word with a perfectly serious face.

This boldness did not prevent him from thinking that women were essentially inferior to men, and infinitely tiresome when they declined to accept the lot which men had made for them. He had the most definite notions about their place in nature, in society, and was perfectly easy in his mind as to whether it excluded them from any proper homage. The chivalrous man paid that tax with alacrity. He admitted their rights; these consisted in a standing claim to the generosity and tenderness of the stronger race.

The exercise of such feelings was full of advantage for both sexes, and they flowed most freely, of course, when women were gracious and grateful. It may be said that he had a higher conception of politeness than most of the persons who desired the advent of female law-makers. When I have added that he hated to see women eager and argumentative, and thought that their softness and docility were the inspiration, the opportunity (the highest) of man, I shall have sketched a state of mind which will doubtless strike many readers as painfully crude. It had prevented Basil Ransom, at any rate, from putting the dots on his *i*'s, as the French say, in this gradual discovery that Mrs. Luna was making love to him. The process went on a long time before he became aware of it. He had perceived very soon that she was a tremendously familiar little woman—that she took, more rapidly than he had ever known, a high degree of intimacy for granted. But as she had seemed to him neither very fresh nor very beautiful, so he could not easily have represented to himself why she should take it into her head to marry (it would never have occurred to him to doubt that she wanted marriage), an obscure and penniless Mississippian, with womenkind of his own to provide for. He could not guess that he answered to a certain secret ideal of Mrs. Luna's, who loved the landed gentry even when landless, who adored a Southerner under any circum-

stances, who thought her kinsman a fine, manly, melancholy, disinterested type, and who was sure that her views of public matters, the questions of the age, the vulgar character of modern life, would meet with a perfect response in his mind. She could see by the way he talked that he was a conservative, and this was the motto inscribed upon her own silken banner. She took this unpopular line both by temperament and by reaction from her sister's 'extreme' views, the sight of the dreadful people that they brought about her. In reality, Olive was distinguished and discriminating, and Adeline was the dupe of confusions in which the worse was apt to be mistaken for the better. She talked to Ransom about the inferiority of republics, the distressing persons she had met abroad in the legations of the United States, the bad manners of servants and shopkeepers in that country, the hope she entertained that 'the good old families' would make a stand; but he never suspected that she cultivated these topics (her treatment of them struck him as highly comical), for the purpose of leading him to the altar, of beguiling the way. Least of all could he suppose that she would be indifferent to his want of income—a point in which he failed to do her justice; for, thinking the fact that he had remained poor a proof of delicacy in that shopkeeping age, it gave her much pleasure to reflect that, as Newton's little property was settled on

him (with safeguards which showed how long-headed poor Mr. Luna had been, and large-hearted, too, since to what he left *her* no disagreeable conditions, such as eternal mourning, for instance, were attached)—that as Newton, I say, enjoyed the pecuniary independence which befitted his character, her own income was ample even for two, and she might give herself the luxury of taking a husband who should owe her something. Basil Ransom did not divine all this, but he divined that it was not for nothing that Mrs. Luna wrote him little notes every other day, that she proposed to drive him in the Park at unnatural hours, and that when he said he had his business to attend to, she replied: 'Oh, a plague on your business! I am sick of that word—one hears of nothing else in America. There are ways of getting on without business, if you would only take them!' He seldom answered her notes, and he disliked extremely the way in which, in spite of her love of form and order, she attempted to clamber in at the window of one's house when one had locked the door; so that he began to interspace his visits considerably, and at last made them very rare. When I reflect on his habits of almost superstitious politeness to women, it comes over me that some very strong motive must have operated to make him give his friendly—his only too friendly—cousin the cold shoulder. Nevertheless, when he received her reproachful

letter (after it had had time to work a little), he said to himself that he had perhaps been unjust and even brutal, and as he was easily touched by remorse of this kind, he took up the broken thread.

XXII.

As he sat with Mrs. Luna, in her little back drawing-room, under the lamp, he felt rather more tolerant than before of the pressure she could not help putting upon him. Several months had elapsed, and he was no nearer to the sort of success he had hoped for. It stole over him gently that there was another sort, pretty visibly open to him, not so elevated nor so manly, it is true, but on which he should after all, perhaps, be able to reconcile it with his honour to fall back. Mrs. Luna had had an inspiration; for once in her life she had held her tongue. She had not made him a scene, there had been no question of an explanation; she had received him as if he had been there the day before, with the addition of a spice of mysterious melancholy. She might have made up her mind that she had lost him as what she had hoped, but that it was better than desolation to try and keep him as a friend. It was as if she wished him to see now how she tried. She was subdued and consolatory, she waited upon him, moved away a screen that

intercepted the fire, remarked that he looked very tired, and rang for some tea. She made no inquiry about his affairs, never asked if he had been busy and prosperous; and this reticence struck him as unexpectedly delicate and discreet; it was as if she had guessed, by a subtle feminine faculty, that his professional career was nothing to boast of. There was a simplicity in him which permitted him to wonder whether she had not improved. The lamp-light was soft, the fire crackled pleasantly, everything that surrounded him betrayed a woman's taste and touch; the place was decorated and cushioned in perfection, delightfully private and personal, the picture of a well-appointed home. Mrs. Luna had complained of the difficulties of installing one's self in America, but Ransom remembered that he had received an impression similar to this in her sister's house in Boston, and reflected that these ladies had, as a family-trait, the art of making themselves comfortable. It was better for a winter's evening than the German beer-cellar (Mrs. Luna's tea was excellent), and his hostess herself appeared to-night almost as amiable as the variety-actress. At the end of an hour he felt, I will not say almost marriageable, but almost married. Images of leisure played before him, leisure in which he saw himself covering foolscap paper with his views on several subjects, and with favourable illustrations of Southern eloquence. It

became tolerably vivid to him that if editors wouldn't print one's lucubrations, it would be a comfort to feel that one was able to publish them at one's own expense.

He had a moment of almost complete illusion. Mrs. Luna had taken up her bit of crochet; she was sitting opposite to him, on the other side of the fire. Her white hands moved with little jerks as she took her stitches, and her rings flashed and twinkled in the light of the hearth. Her head fell a little to one side, exhibiting the plumpness of her chin and neck, and her dropped eyes (it gave her a little modest air), rested quietly on her work. A silence of a few moments had fallen upon their talk, and Adeline—who decidedly *had* improved—appeared also to feel the charm of it, not to wish to break it. Basil Ransom was conscious of all this, and at the same time he was vaguely engaged in a speculation. If it gave one time, if it gave one leisure, was not that in itself a high motive? Thorough study of the question he cared for most—was not the chance for *that* an infinitely desirable good? He seemed to see himself, to feel himself, in that very chair, in the evenings of the future, reading some indispensable book in the still lamp-light—Mrs. Luna knew where to get such pretty mellowing shades. Should he not be able to act in that way upon the public opinion of his time, to check certain tendencies, to point out certain dangers, to indulge

in much salutary criticism? Was it not one's duty to put one's self in the best conditions for such action? And as the silence continued he almost fell to musing on his duty, almost persuaded himself that the moral law commanded him to marry Mrs. Luna. She looked up presently from her work, their eyes met, and she smiled. He might have believed she had guessed what he was thinking of. This idea startled him, alarmed him a little, so that when Mrs. Luna said, with her sociable manner, 'There is nothing I like so much, of a winter's night, as a cosy *tête-à-tête* by the fire. It's quite like Darby and Joan; what a pity the kettle has ceased singing!'—when she uttered these insinuating words he gave himself a little imperceptible shake, which was, however, enough to break the spell, and made no response more direct than to ask her, in a moment, in a tone of cold, mild curiosity, whether she had lately heard from her sister, and how long Miss Chancellor intended to remain in Europe.

'Well, you *have* been living in your hole!' Mrs. Luna exclaimed. 'Olive came home six weeks ago. How long did you expect her to endure it?'

'I am sure I don't know; I have never been there,' Ransom replied.

'Yes, that's what I like you for,' Mrs. Luna remarked sweetly. 'If a man is nice without it, it's such a pleasant change.'

The young man started, then gave a natural laugh. 'Lord, how few reasons there must be!'

'Oh, I mention that one because I can tell it. I shouldn't care to tell the others.'

'I am glad you have some to fall back upon, the day I should go,' Ransom went on. 'I thought you thought so much of Europe.'

'So I do; but it isn't everything,' said Mrs. Luna, philosophically. 'You had better go there with me,' she added, with a certain inconsequence.

'One would go to the end of the world with so irresistible a lady!' Ransom exclaimed, falling into the tone which Mrs. Luna always found so unsatisfactory. It was a part of his Southern gallantry—his accent always came out strongly when he said anything of that sort—and it committed him to nothing in particular. She had had occasion to wish, more than once, that he wouldn't be so beastly polite, as she used to hear people say in England. She answered that she didn't care about ends, she cared about beginnings; but he didn't take up the declaration; he returned to the subject of Olive, wanted to know what she had done over there, whether she had worked them up much.

'Oh, of course, she fascinated every one,' said Mrs. Luna. 'With her grace and beauty, her general style, how could she help that?'

'But did she bring them round, did she swell the host that is prepared to march under her banner?'

'I suppose she saw plenty of the strong-minded, plenty of vicious old maids, and fanatics, and frumps. But I haven't the least idea what she accomplished—what they call "wonders," I suppose.'

'Didn't you see her when she returned?' Basil Ransom asked.

'How could I see her? I can see pretty far, but I can't see all the way to Boston.' And then, in explaining that it was at this port that her sister had disembarked, Mrs. Luna further inquired whether he could imagine Olive doing anything in a first-rate way, as long as there were inferior ones. 'Of course she likes bad ships—Boston steamers—just as she likes common people, and red-haired hoydens, and preposterous doctrines.'

Ransom was silent a moment. 'Do you mean the—a—rather striking young lady whom I met in Boston a year ago last October? What was her name?—Miss Tarrant? Does Miss Chancellor like her as much as ever?'

'Mercy! don't you know she took her to Europe? It was to form *her* mind she went. Didn't I tell you that last summer? You used to come to see me then.'

'Oh yes, I remember,' Ransom said, rather musingly. 'And did she bring her back?'

'Gracious, you don't suppose she would leave her! Olive thinks she's born to regenerate the world.'

'I remember you telling me that, too. It comes back to me. Well, is her mind formed?'

'As I haven't seen it, I cannot tell you.'

'Aren't you going on there to see——'

'To see whether Miss Tarrant's mind is formed?' Mrs. Luna broke in. 'I will go if you would like me to. I remember your being immensely excited about her that time you met her. Don't you recollect that?'

Ransom hesitated an instant. 'I can't say I do. It is too long ago.'

'Yes, I have no doubt that's the way you change, about women! Poor Miss Tarrant, if she thinks she made an impression on you!'

'She won't think about such things as that, if her mind has been formed by your sister,' Ransom said. 'It does come back to me now, what you told me about the growth of their intimacy. And do they mean to go on living together for ever?'

'I suppose so—unless some one should take it into his head to marry Verena.'

'Verena—is that her name?' Ransom asked.

Mrs. Luna looked at him with a suspended needle. 'Well! have you forgotten that too? You told me

yourself you thought it so pretty, that time in Boston, when you walked me up the hill.' Ransom declared that he remembered that walk, but didn't remember everything he had said to her; and she suggested, very satirically, that perhaps he would like to marry Verena himself—he seemed so interested in her. Ransom shook his head sadly, and said he was afraid he was not in a position to marry; whereupon Mrs. Luna asked him what he meant—did he mean (after a moment's hesitation) that he was too poor?

'Never in the world—I am very rich; I make an enormous income!' the young man exclaimed; so that, remarking his tone, and the slight flush of annoyance that rose to his face, Mrs. Luna was quick enough to judge that she had overstepped the mark. She remembered (she ought to have remembered before), that he had never taken her in the least into his confidence about his affairs. That was not the Southern way, and he was at least as proud as he was poor. In this surmise she was just; Basil Ransom would have despised himself if he had been capable of confessing to a woman that he couldn't make a living. Such questions were none of their business (their business was simply to be provided for, practise the domestic virtues, and be charmingly grateful), and there was, to his sense, something almost indecent in talking about them. Mrs. Luna felt doubly sorry for him as she perceived that he

denied himself the luxury of sympathy (that is, of hers), and the vague but comprehensive sigh that passed her lips as she took up her crochet again was unusually expressive of helplessness. She said that of course she knew how great his talents were—he could do anything he wanted; and Basil Ransom wondered for a moment whether, if she were to ask him point-blank to marry her, it would be consistent with the high courtesy of a Southern gentleman to refuse. After she should be his wife he might of course confess to her that he was too poor to marry, for in that relation even a Southern gentleman of the highest tone must sometimes unbend. But he didn't in the least long for this arrangement, and was conscious that the most pertinent sequel to her conjecture would be for him to take up his hat and walk away.

Within five minutes, however, he had come to desire to do this almost as little as to marry Mrs. Luna. He wanted to hear more about the girl who lived with Olive Chancellor. Something had revived in him—an old curiosity, an image half effaced—when he learned that she had come back to America. He had taken a wrong impression from what Mrs. Luna said, nearly a year before, about her sister's visit to Europe; he had supposed it was to be a long absence, that Miss Chancellor wanted perhaps to get the little prophetess away from her parents, possibly even

away from some amorous entanglement. Then, no doubt, they wanted to study up the woman-question with the facilities that Europe would offer; he didn't know much about Europe, but he had an idea that it was a great place for facilities. His knowledge of Miss Chancellor's departure, accompanied by her young companion, had checked at the time, on Ransom's part, a certain habit of idle but none the less entertaining retrospect. His life, on the whole, had not been rich in episode, and that little chapter of his visit to his queer, clever, capricious cousin, with his evening at Miss Birdseye's, and his glimpse, repeated on the morrow, of the strange, beautiful, ridiculous, red-haired young *improvisatrice*, unrolled itself in his memory like a page of interesting fiction. The page seemed to fade, however, when he heard that the two girls had gone, for an indefinite time, to unknown lands; this carried them out of his range, spoiled the perspective, diminished their actuality; so that for several months past, with his increase of anxiety about his own affairs, and the low pitch of his spirits, he had not thought at all about Verena Tarrant. The fact that she was once more in Boston, with a certain contiguity that it seemed to imply between Boston and New York, presented itself now as important and agreeable. He was conscious that this was rather an anomaly, and his consciousness made him, had already made him, dissimulate slightly. He

did not pick up his hat to go; he sat in his chair taking his chance of the tax which Mrs. Luna might lay upon his urbanity. He remembered that he had not made, as yet, any very eager inquiry about Newton, who at this late hour had succumbed to the only influence that tames the untamable and was sleeping the sleep of childhood, if not of innocence. Ransom repaired his neglect in a manner which elicited the most copious response from his hostess. The boy had had a good many tutors since Ransom gave him up, and it could not be said that his education languished. Mrs. Luna spoke with pride of the manner in which he went through them; if he did not master his lessons, he mastered his teachers, and she had the happy conviction that she gave him every advantage. Ransom's delay was diplomatic, but at the end of ten minutes he returned to the young ladies in Boston; he asked why, with their aggressive programme, one hadn't begun to feel their onset, why the echoes of Miss Tarrant's eloquence hadn't reached his ears. Hadn't she come out yet in public? was she not coming to stir them up in New York? He hoped she hadn't broken down.

'She didn't seem to break down last summer, at the Female Convention,' Mrs. Luna replied. 'Have you forgotten that too? Didn't I tell you of the sensation she produced there, and of what I heard from Boston about

it? Do you mean to say I didn't give you that 'Transcript,' with the report of her great speech? It was just before they sailed for Europe; she went off with flying colours, in a blaze of fireworks.' Ransom protested that he had not heard this affair mentioned till that moment, and then, when they compared dates, they found it had taken place just after his last visit to Mrs. Luna. This, of course, gave her a chance to say that he had treated her even worse than she supposed; it had been her impression, at any rate, that they had talked together about Verena's sudden bound into fame. Apparently she confounded him with some one else, that was very possible; he was not to suppose that he occupied such a distinct place in her mind, especially when she might die twenty deaths before he came near her. Ransom demurred to the implication that Miss Tarrant was famous; if she were famous, wouldn't she be in the New York papers? He hadn't seen her there, and he had no recollection of having encountered any mention at the time (last June, was it?) of her exploits at the Female Convention. A local reputation doubtless she had, but that had been the case a year and a half before, and what was expected of her then was to become a first-class national glory. He was willing to believe that she had created some excitement in Boston, but he shouldn't attach much importance to that till one began to see her photograph in the

stores. Of course, one must give her time, but he had supposed Miss Chancellor was going to put her through faster.

If he had taken a contradictious tone on purpose to draw Mrs. Luna out, he could not have elicited more of the information he desired. It was perfectly true that he had seen no reference to Verena's performances in the preceding June; there were periods when the newspapers seemed to him so idiotic that for weeks he never looked at one. He learned from Mrs. Luna that it was not Olive who had sent her the 'Transcript' and in letters had added some private account of the doings at the convention to the testimony of that amiable sheet; she had been indebted for this service to a 'gentleman-friend,' who wrote her everything that happened in Boston, and what every one had every day for dinner. Not that it was necessary for her happiness to know; but the gentleman she spoke of didn't know what to invent to please her. A Bostonian couldn't imagine that one didn't want to know, and that was their idea of ingratiating themselves, or, at any rate, it was his, poor man. Olive would never have gone into particulars about Verena; she regarded her sister as quite too much one of the profane, and knew Adeline couldn't understand why, when she took to herself a bosom-friend, she should have been at such pains to select her in just the most dreadful

class in the community. Verena was a perfect little adventuress, and quite third-rate into the bargain; but, of course, she was a pretty girl enough, if one cared for hair of the colour of cochineal. As for her people, they were too absolutely awful; it was exactly as if she, Mrs. Luna, had struck up an intimacy with the daughter of her chiropodist. It took Olive to invent such monstrosities, and to think she was doing something great for humanity when she did so; though, in spite of her wanting to turn everything over, and put the lowest highest, she could be just as contemptuous and invidious, when it came to really mixing, as if she were some grand old duchess. She must do her the justice to say that she hated the Tarrants, the father and mother; but, all the same, she let Verena run to and fro between Charles Street and the horrible hole they lived in, and Adeline knew from that gentleman who wrote so copiously that the girl now and then spent a week at a time at Cambridge. Her mother, who had been ill for some weeks, wanted her to sleep there. Mrs. Luna knew further, by her correspondent, that Verena had—or had had the winter before—a great deal of attention from gentlemen. She didn't know how she worked that into the idea that the female sex was sufficient to itself; but she had grounds for saying that this was one reason why Olive had taken her abroad. She was afraid Verena would give in to some

man, and she wanted to make a break. Of course, any such giving in would be very awkward for a young woman who shrieked out on platforms that old maids were the highest type. Adeline guessed Olive had perfect control of her now, unless indeed she used the expeditions to Cambridge as a cover for meeting gentlemen. She was an artful little minx, and cared as much for the rights of women as she did for the Panama Canal; the only right of a woman she wanted was to climb up on top of something, where the men could look at her. She would stay with Olive as long as it served her purpose, because Olive, with her great respectability, could push her, and counteract the effect of her low relations, to say nothing of paying all her expenses and taking her the tour of Europe. 'But, mark my words,' said Mrs. Luna, 'she will give Olive the greatest cut she has ever had in her life. She will run off with some lion-tamer; she will marry a circus man!' And Mrs. Luna added that it would serve Olive Chancellor right. But she would take it hard; look out for tantrums then!

Basil Ransom's emotions were peculiar while his hostess delivered herself, in a manner at once casual and emphatic, of these rather insidious remarks. He took them all in, for they represented to him certain very interesting facts; but he perceived at the same time that Mrs. Luna didn't know what she was talking about. He had seen Verena

Tarrant only twice in his life, but it was no use telling him that she was an adventuress—though, certainly, it *was* very likely she would end by giving Miss Chancellor a cut. He chuckled, with a certain grimness, as this image passed before him; it was not unpleasing, the idea that he should be avenged (for it would avenge him to know it), upon the wanton young woman who had invited him to come and see her in order simply to slap his face. But he had an odd sense of having lost something in not knowing of the other girl's appearance at the Women's Convention—a vague feeling that he had been cheated and trifled with. The complaint was idle, inasmuch as it was not probable he could have gone to Boston to listen to her; but it represented to him that he had not shared, even dimly and remotely, in an event which concerned her very closely. Why should he share, and what was more natural than that the things which concerned her closely should not concern him at all? This question came to him only as he walked home that evening; for the moment it remained quite in abeyance: therefore he was free to feel also that his imagination had been rather starved by his ignorance of the fact that she was near him again (comparatively), that she was in the dimness of the horizon (no longer beyond the curve of the globe), and yet he had not perceived it. This sense of personal loss, as I have called it, made him

feel, further, that he had something to make up, to recover. He could scarcely have told you how he would go about it; but the idea, formless though it was, led him in a direction very different from the one he had been following a quarter of an hour before. As he watched it dance before him he fell into another silence, in the midst of which Mrs. Luna gave him another mystic smile. The effect of it was to make him rise to his feet; the whole landscape of his mind had suddenly been illuminated. Decidedly, it was *not* his duty to marry Mrs. Luna, in order to have means to pursue his studies; he jerked himself back, as if he had been on the point of it.

'You don't mean to say you are going already? I haven't said half I wanted to!' she exclaimed.

He glanced at the clock, saw it was not yet late, took a turn about the room, then sat down again in a different place, while she followed him with her eyes, wondering what was the matter with him. Ransom took good care not to ask her what it was she had still to say, and perhaps it was to prevent her telling him that he now began to talk, freely, quickly, in quite a new tone. He stayed half an hour longer, and made himself very agreeable. It seemed to Mrs. Luna now that he had every distinction (she had known he had most), that he was really a charming man. He abounded in conversation, till at last he took

up his hat in earnest; he talked about the state of the South, its social peculiarities, the ruin wrought by the war, the dilapidated gentry, the queer types of superannuated fire-eaters, ragged and unreconciled, all the pathos and all the comedy of it, making her laugh at one moment, almost cry at another, and say to herself throughout that when he took it into his head there was no one who could make a lady's evening pass so pleasantly. It was only afterwards that she asked herself why he had not taken it into his head till the last, so quickly. She delighted in the dilapidated gentry; her taste was completely different from her sister's, who took an interest only in the lower class, as it struggled to rise; what Adeline cared for was the fallen aristocracy (it seemed to be falling everywhere very much; was not Basil Ransom an example of it? was he not like a French *gentilhomme de province* after the Revolution? or an old monarchical *émigré* from the Languedoc?), the despoiled patriciate, I say, whose attitude was noble and touching, and toward whom one might exercise a charity as discreet as their pride was sensitive. In all Mrs. Luna's visions of herself, her discretion was the leading feature. 'Are you going to let ten years elapse again before you come?' she asked, as Basil Ransom bade her good-night. 'You must let me know, because between this and your next visit I shall have time to go to Europe

and come back. I shall take care to arrive the day before.'

Instead of answering this sally, Ransom said, 'Are you not going one of these days to Boston? Are you not going to pay your sister another visit?'

Mrs. Luna stared. 'What good will that do *you?* Excuse my stupidity,' she added; 'of course, it gets me away. Thank you very much!'

'I don't want you to go away; but I want to hear more about Miss Olive.'

'Why in the world? You know you loathe her!' Here, before Ransom could reply, Mrs. Luna again overtook herself. 'I verily believe that by Miss Olive you mean Miss Verena!' Her eyes charged him a moment with this perverse intention; then she exclaimed, 'Basil Ransom, *are* you in love with that creature?'

He gave a perfectly natural laugh, not pleading guilty, in order to practise on Mrs. Luna, but expressing the simple state of the case. 'How should I be? I have seen her but twice in my life.'

'If you had seen her more, I shouldn't be afraid! Fancy your wanting to pack me off to Boston!' his hostess went on. 'I am in no hurry to stay with Olive again; besides, that girl takes up the whole house. You had better go there yourself.'

'I should like nothing better,' said Ransom.

'Perhaps you would like me to ask Verena to spend a month with me—it might be a way of attracting you to the house,' Adeline went on, in the tone of exuberant provocation.

Ransom was on the point of replying that it would be a better way than any other, but he checked himself in time; he had never yet, even in joke, made so crude, so rude a speech to a lady. You only knew when he was joking with women by his superadded civility. 'I beg you to believe there is nothing I would do for any woman in the world that I wouldn't do for you,' he said, bending, for the last time, over Mrs. Luna's plump hand.

'I shall remember that and keep you up to it!' she cried after him, as he went. But even with this rather lively exchange of vows he felt that he had got off rather easily. He walked slowly up Fifth Avenue, into which, out of Adeline's cross-street, he had turned, by the light of a fine winter moon; and at every corner he stopped a minute, lingered in meditation, while he exhaled a soft, vague sigh. This was an unconscious, involuntary expression of relief, such as a man might utter who had seen himself on the point of being run over and yet felt that he was whole. He didn't trouble himself much to ask what had saved him; whatever it was it had produced a reaction,

so that he felt rather ashamed of having found his look-out of late so blank. By the time he reached his lodgings, his ambition, his resolution, had rekindled; he had remembered that he formerly supposed he was a man of ability, that nothing particular had occurred to make him doubt it (the evidence was only negative, not positive), and that at any rate he was young enough to have another try. He whistled that night as he went to bed.

XXIII.

THREE weeks afterward he stood in front of Olive Chancellor's house, looking up and down the street and hesitating. He had told Mrs. Luna that he should like nothing better than to make another journey to Boston; and it was not simply because he liked it that he had come. I was on the point of saying that a happy chance had favoured him, but it occurs to me that one is under no obligation to call chances by flattering epithets when they have been waited for so long. At any rate, the darkest hour is before the dawn; and a few days after that melancholy evening I have described, which Ransom spent in his German beer-cellar, before a single glass, soon emptied, staring at his future with an unremunerated eye, he found that the world appeared to have need of him yet. The 'party,' as he would have said (I cannot pretend that his speech was too heroic for that), for whom he had transacted business in Boston so many months before, and who had expressed at the time but a limited appreciation of his

services (there had been between the lawyer and his client a divergence of judgment), observing, apparently, that they proved more fruitful than he expected, had reopened the affair and presently requested Ransom to transport himself again to the sister city. His errand demanded more time than before, and for three days he gave it his constant attention. On the fourth he found he was still detained; he should have to wait till the evening—some important papers were to be prepared. He determined to treat the interval as a holiday, and he wondered what one could do in Boston to give one's morning a festive complexion. The weather was brilliant enough to minister to any illusion, and he strolled along the streets, taking it in. In front of the Music Hall and of Tremont Temple he stopped, looking at the posters in the doorway; for was it not possible that Miss Chancellor's little friend might be just then addressing her fellow-citizens? Her name was absent, however, and this resource seemed to mock him. He knew no one in the place but Olive Chancellor, so there was no question of a visit to pay. He was perfectly resolved that he would never go near *her* again; she was doubtless a very superior being, but she had been too rough with him to tempt him further. Politeness, even a largely-interpreted 'chivalry,' required nothing more than he had already done; he had quitted her, the other year,

without telling her that she was a vixen, and that reticence was chivalrous enough. There was also Verena Tarrant, of course; he saw no reason to dissemble when he spoke of her to himself, and he allowed himself the entertainment of feeling that he should like very much to see her again. Very likely she wouldn't seem to him the same; the impression she had made upon him was due to some accident of mood or circumstance; and, at any rate, any charm she might have exhibited then had probably been obliterated by the coarsening effect of publicity and the tonic influence of his kinswoman. It will be observed that in this reasoning of Basil Ransom's the impression was freely recognised, and recognised as a phenomenon still present. The attraction might have vanished, as he said to himself, but the mental picture of it was yet vivid. The greater the pity that he couldn't call upon Verena (he called her by her name in his thoughts, it was so pretty), without calling upon Olive, and that Olive was so disagreeable as to place that effort beyond his strength. There was another consideration, with Ransom, which eminently belonged to the man; he believed that Miss Chancellor had conceived, in the course of those few hours, and in a manner that formed so absurd a sequel to her having gone out of her way to make his acquaintance, such a dislike to him that it would be odious to her to see him again within her doors; and he

would have felt indelicate in taking warrant from her original invitation (before she had seen him), to inflict on her a presence which he had no reason to suppose the lapse of time had made less offensive. She had given him no sign of pardon or penitence in any of the little ways that are familiar to women—by sending him a message through her sister, or even a book, a photograph, a Christmas card, or a newspaper, by the post. He felt, in a word, not at liberty to ring at her door; he didn't know what kind of a fit the sight of his long Mississippian person would give her, and it was characteristic of him that he should wish so to spare the sensibilities of a young lady whom he had not found tender; being ever as willing to let women off easily in the particular case as he was fixed in the belief that the sex in general requires watching.

Nevertheless, he found himself, at the end of half an hour, standing on the only spot in Charles Street which had any significance for him. It had occurred to him that if he couldn't call upon Verena without calling upon Olive, he should be exempt from that condition if he called upon Mrs. Tarrant. It was not her mother, truly, who had asked him, it was the girl herself; and he was conscious, as a candid young American, that a mother is always less accessible, more guarded by social prejudice, than a daughter. But he was at a pass in which it was permissible to strain

a point, and he took his way in the direction in which he knew that Cambridge lay, remembering that Miss Tarrant's invitation had reference to that quarter and that Mrs. Luna had given him further evidence. Had she not said that Verena often went back there for visits of several days—that her mother had been ill and she gave her much care? There was nothing inconceivable in her being engaged at that hour (it was getting to be one o'clock), in one of those expeditions—nothing impossible in the chance that he might find her in Cambridge. The chance, at any rate, was worth taking; Cambridge, moreover, was worth seeing, and it was as good a way as another of keeping his holiday. It occurred to him, indeed, that Cambridge was a big place, and that he had no particular address. This reflection overtook him just as he reached Olive's house, which, oddly enough, he was obliged to pass on his way to the mysterious suburb. That is partly why he paused there; he asked himself for a moment why he shouldn't ring the bell and obtain his needed information from the servant, who would be sure to be able to give it to him. He had just dismissed this method, as of questionable taste, when he heard the door of the house open, within the deep embrasure in which, in Charles Street, the main portals are set, and which are partly occupied by a flight of steps protected at the bottom by a second door, whose upper half, in either wing, consists

of a sheet of glass. It was a minute before he could see who had come out, and in that minute he had time to turn away and then to turn back again, and to wonder which of the two inmates would appear to him, or whether he should behold neither or both.

The person who had issued from the house descended the steps very slowly, as if on purpose to give him time to escape; and when at last the glass doors were divided they disclosed a little old lady. Ransom was disappointed; such an apparition was so scantily to his purpose. But the next minute his spirits rose again, for he was sure that he had seen the little old lady before. She stopped on the side-walk, and looked vaguely about her, in the manner of a person waiting for an omnibus or a street-car; she had a dingy, loosely-habited air, as if she had worn her clothes for many years and yet was even now imperfectly acquainted with them; a large, benignant face, caged in by the glass of her spectacles, which seemed to cover it almost equally everywhere, and a fat, rusty satchel, which hung low at her side, as if it wearied her to carry it. This gave Ransom time to recognise her; he knew in Boston no such figure as that save Miss Birdseye. Her party, her person, the exalted account Miss Chancellor gave of her, had kept a very distinct place in his mind; and while she stood there in dim circumspection she came back to him as a friend of

yesterday. His necessity gave a point to the reminiscences she evoked; it took him only a moment to reflect that she would be able to tell him where Verena Tarrant was at that particular time, and where, if need be, her parents lived. Her eyes rested on him, and as she saw that he was looking at her she didn't go through the ceremony (she had broken so completely with all conventions), of removing them; he evidently represented nothing to her but a sentient fellow-citizen in the enjoyment of his rights, which included that of staring. Miss Birdseye's modesty had never pretended that it was not to be publicly challenged; there were so many bright new motives and ideas in the world that there might even be reasons for looking at her. When Ransom approached her and, raising his hat with a smile, said, 'Shall I stop this car for you, Miss Birdseye?' she only looked at him more vaguely, in her complete failure to seize the idea that this might be simply Fame. She had trudged about the streets of Boston for fifty years, and at no period had she received that amount of attention from dark-eyed young men. She glanced, in an unprejudiced way, at the big parti-coloured human van which now jingled toward them from out of the Cambridge road. 'Well, I should like to get into it, if it will take me home,' she answered. 'Is this a South End car?'

The vehicle had been stopped by the conductor, on his

perceiving Miss Birdseye; he evidently recognised her as a frequent passenger. He went, however, through none of the forms of reassurance beyond remarking, 'You want to get right in here—quick,' but stood with his hand raised, in a threatening way, to the cord of his signal-bell.

'You must allow me the honour of taking you home, madam; I will tell you who I am,' Basil Ransom said, in obedience to a rapid reflection. He helped her into the car, the conductor pressed a fraternal hand upon her back, and in a moment the young man was seated beside her, and the jingling had recommenced. At that hour of the day the car was almost empty, and they had it virtually to themselves.

'Well, I know you are some one; I don't think you belong round here,' Miss Birdseye declared, as they proceeded.

'I was once at your house—on a very interesting occasion. Do you remember a party you gave, a year ago last October, to which Miss Chancellor came, and another young lady, who made a wonderful speech?'

'Oh yes! when Verena Tarrant moved us all so! There were a good many there; I don't remember all.'

'I was one of them,' Basil Ransom said; 'I came with Miss Chancellor, who is a kind of relation of mine, and you were very good to me.'

'What did I do?' asked Miss Birdseye, candidly. Then, before he could answer her, she recognised him. 'I remember you now, and Olive bringing you! You're a Southern gentleman—she told me about you afterwards. You don't approve of our great struggle—you want us to be kept down.' The old lady spoke with perfect mildness, as if she had long ago done with passion and resentment. Then she added, 'Well, I presume we can't have the sympathy of all.'

'Doesn't it look as if you had my sympathy, when I get into a car on purpose to see you home—one of the principal agitators?' Ransom inquired, laughing.

'Did you get in on purpose?'

'Quite on purpose. I am not so bad as Miss Chancellor thinks me.'

'Oh, I presume you have your ideas,' said Miss Birdseye. 'Of course, Southerners have peculiar views. I suppose they retain more than one might think. I hope you won't ride too far—I know my way round Boston.'

'Don't object to me, or think me officious,' Ransom replied. 'I want to ask you something.'

Miss Birdseye looked at him again. 'Oh yes, I place you now; you conversed some with Doctor Prance.'

'To my great edification!' Ransom exclaimed. 'And I hope Doctor Prance is well.'

'She looks after every one's health but her own,' said Miss Birdseye, smiling. 'When I tell her that, she says she hasn't got any to look after. She says she's the only woman in Boston that hasn't got a doctor. She was determined she wouldn't be a patient, and it seemed as if the only way not to be one was to be a doctor. She is trying to make me sleep; that's her principal occupation.'

'Is it possible you don't sleep yet?' Ransom asked, almost tenderly.

'Well, just a little. But by the time I get to sleep I have to get up. I can't sleep when I want to live.'

'You ought to come down South,' the young man suggested. 'In that languid air you would doze deliciously!

'Well, I don't want to be languid,' said Miss Birdseye. 'Besides, I have been down South, in the old times, and I can't say they let me sleep very much; they were always round after me!'

'Do you mean on account of the negroes?'

'Yes, I couldn't think of anything else then. I carried them the Bible.'

Ransom was silent a moment; then he said, in a tone which evidently was carefully considerate, 'I should like to hear all about that!'

'Well, fortunately, we are not required now; we are required for something else.' And Miss Birdseye looked

at him with a wandering, tentative humour, as if he would know what she meant.

'You mean for the other slaves!' he exclaimed, with a laugh. 'You can carry them all the Bibles you want.'

'I want to carry them the Statute-book; that must be our Bible now.'

Ransom found himself liking Miss Birdseye very much, and it was quite without hypocrisy or a tinge too much of the local quality in his speech that he said: 'Wherever you go, madam, it will matter little what you carry. You will always carry your goodness.'

For a minute she made no response. Then she murmured: 'That's the way Olive Chancellor told me you talked.'

'I am afraid she has told you little good of me.'

'Well, I am sure she thinks she is right.'

'Thinks it?' said Ransom. 'Why, she knows it, with supreme certainty! By the way, I hope she is well.'

Miss Birdseye stared again. 'Haven't you seen her? Are you not visiting?'

'Oh no, I am not visiting! I was literally passing her house when I met you.'

'Perhaps you live here now,' said Miss Birdseye. And when he had corrected this impression, she added, in a

tone which showed with what positive confidence he had now inspired her, 'Hadn't you better drop in?'

'It would give Miss Chancellor no pleasure,' Basil Ransom rejoined. 'She regards me as an enemy in the camp.'

'Well, she is very brave.'

'Precisely. And I am very timid.'

'Didn't you fight once?'

'Yes; but it was in such a good cause!'

Ransom meant this allusion to the great Secession and, by comparison, to the attitude of the resisting male (laudable even as that might be), to be decently jocular; but Miss Birdseye took it very seriously, and sat there for a good while as speechless as if she meant to convey that she had been going on too long now to be able to discuss the propriety of the late rebellion. The young man felt that he had silenced her, and he was very sorry; for, with all deference to the disinterested Southern attitude toward the unprotected female, what he had got into the car with her for was precisely to make her talk. He had wished for general, as well as for particular, news of Verena Tarrant; it was a topic on which he had proposed to draw Miss Birdseye out. He preferred not to broach it himself, and he waited awhile for another opening. At last, when he was on the point of exposing himself by a direct inquiry (he reflected that the exposure would in any case not be

long averted), she anticipated him by saying, in a manner which showed that her thoughts had continued in the same train, 'I wonder very much that Miss Tarrant didn't affect you that evening!'

'Ah, but she did!' Ransom said, with alacrity. 'I thought her very charming!'

'Didn't you think her very reasonable?'

'God forbid, madam! I consider women have no business to be reasonable.'

His companion turned upon him, slowly and mildly, and each of her glasses, in her aspect of reproach, had the glitter of an enormous tear. 'Do you regard us, then, simply as lovely baubles?'

The effect of this question, as coming from Miss Birdseye, and referring in some degree to her own venerable identity, was such as to move him to irresistible laughter. But he controlled himself quickly enough to say, with genuine expression, 'I regard you as the dearest thing in life, the only thing which makes it worth living!'

'Worth living for—you! But for us?' suggested Miss Birdseye.

'It's worth any woman's while to be admired as I admire you. Miss Tarrant, of whom we were speaking, affected me, as you say, in this way—that I think more

highly still, if possible, of the sex which produced such a delightful young lady.'

'Well, we think everything of her here,' said Miss Birdseye. 'It seems as if it were a real gift.'

'Does she speak often—is there any chance of my hearing her now?'

'She raises her voice a good deal in the places round—like Framingham and Billerica. It seems as if she were gathering strength, just to break over Boston like a wave. In fact she did break, last summer. She is a growing power since her great success at the convention.'

'Ah! her success at the convention was very great?' Ransom inquired, putting discretion into his voice.

Miss Birdseye hesitated a moment, in order to measure her response by the bounds of righteousness. 'Well,' she said, with the tenderness of a long retrospect, 'I have seen nothing like it since I last listened to Eliza P. Moseley.'

'What a pity she isn't speaking somewhere to-night!' Ransom exclaimed.

'Oh, to-night she's out in Cambridge. Olive Chancellor mentioned that.'

'Is she making a speech there?'

'No; she's visiting her home.'

'I thought her home was in Charles Street?'

'Well, no; that's her residence—her principal one—

since she became so united to your cousin. Isn't Miss Chancellor your cousin?'

'We don't insist on the relationship,' said Ransom, smiling. 'Are they very much united, the two young ladies?

'You would say so if you were to see Miss Chancellor when Verena rises to eloquence. It's as if the chords were strung across her own heart; she seems to vibrate, to echo with every word. It's a very close and very beautiful tie, and we think everything of it here. They will work together for a great good!'

'I hope so,' Ransom remarked. 'But in spite of it Miss Tarrant spends a part of her time with her father and mother.'

'Yes, she seems to have something for every one. If you were to see her at home, you would think she was all the daughter. She leads a lovely life!' said Miss Birdseye.

'See her at home? That's exactly what I want!' Ransom rejoined, feeling that if he was to come to this he needn't have had scruples at first. 'I haven't forgotten that she invited me, when I met her.'

'Oh, of course she attracts many visitors,' said Miss Birdseye, limiting her encouragement to this statement.

'Yes; she must be used to admirers. And where, in Cambridge, do her family live?'

'Oh, it's on one of those little streets that don't seem to have very much of a name. But they do call it—they do call it——' she meditated, audibly.

This process was interrupted by an abrupt allocution from the conductor. 'I guess you change here for *your* place. You want one of them blue cars.'

The good lady returned to a sense of the situation, and Ransom helped her out of the vehicle, with the aid, as before, of a certain amount of propulsion from the conductor. Her road branched off to the right, and she had to wait on the corner of a street, there being as yet no blue car within hail. The corner was quiet and the day favourable to patience—a day of relaxed rigour and intense brilliancy. It was as if the touch of the air itself were gloved, and the street-colouring had the richness of a superficial thaw. Ransom, of course, waited with his philanthropic companion, though she now protested more vigorously against the idea that a gentleman from the South should pretend to teach an old abolitionist the mysteries of Boston. He promised to leave her when he should have consigned her to the blue car; and meanwhile they stood in the sun, with their backs against an apothecary's window, and she tried again, at his suggestion, to remember the name of Doctor Tarrant's street. 'I guess if you ask for Doctor Tarrant, any one can tell you,' she

said; and then suddenly the address came to her—the residence of the mesmeric healer was in Monadnoc Place.

'But you'll have to ask for that, so it comes to the same,' she went on. After this she added, with a friendliness more personal, 'Ain't you going to see your cousin too?'

'Not if I can help it!'

Miss Birdseye gave a little ineffectual sigh. 'Well, I suppose every one must act out their ideal. That's what Olive Chancellor does. She's a very noble character.'

'Oh yes, a glorious nature.'

'You know their opinions are just the same—hers and Verena's,' Miss Birdseye placidly continued. 'So why should you make a distinction?'

'My dear madam,' said Ransom, 'does a woman consist of nothing but her opinions? I like Miss Tarrant's lovely face better, to begin with.'

'Well, she *is* pretty-looking.' And Miss Birdseye gave another sigh, as if she had had a theory submitted to her—that one about a lady's opinions—which, with all that was unfamiliar and peculiar lying behind it, she was really too old to look into much. It might have been the first time she really felt her age. 'There's a blue car,' she said, in a tone of mild relief.

'It will be some moments before it gets here. More-

over, I don't believe that at bottom they *are* Miss Tarrant's opinions,' Ransom added.

'You mustn't think she hasn't a strong hold of them,' his companion exclaimed, more briskly. 'If you think she is not sincere, you are very much mistaken. Those views are just her life.'

'Well, *she* may bring me round to them,' said Ransom, smiling.

Miss Birdseye had been watching her blue car, the advance of which was temporarily obstructed. At this, she transferred her eyes to him, gazing at him solemnly out of the pervasive window of her spectacles. 'Well, I shouldn't wonder if she did! Yes, that will be a good thing. I don't see how you can help being a good deal shaken by her. She has acted on so many.'

'I see; no doubt she will act on me.' Then it occurred to Ransom to add: 'By the way, Miss Birdseye, perhaps you will be so kind as not to mention this meeting of ours to my cousin, in case of your seeing her again. I have a perfectly good conscience in not calling upon her, but I shouldn't like her to think that I announced my slighting intention all over the town. I don't want to offend her, and she had better not know that I have been in Boston. If you don't tell her, no one else will.'

'Do you wish me to conceal——?' murmured Miss Birdseye, panting a little.

'No, I don't want you to conceal anything. I only want you to let this incident pass—to say nothing.'

'Well, I never did anything of that kind.'

'Of what kind?' Ransom was half vexed, half touched by her inability to enter into his point of view, and her resistance made him hold to his idea the more. 'It is very simple, what I ask of you. You are under no obligation to tell Miss Chancellor everything that happens to you, are you?'

His request seemed still something of a shock to the poor old lady's candour. 'Well, I see her very often, and we talk a great deal. And then—won't Verena tell her?'

'I have thought of that—but I hope not.'

'She tells her most everything. Their union is so close.'

'She won't want her to be wounded,' Ransom said, ingeniously.

'Well, you *are* considerate.' And Miss Birdseye continued to gaze at him. 'It's a pity you can't sympathise.'

'As I tell you, perhaps Miss Tarrant will bring me round. You have before you a possible convert,' Ransom went on, without, I fear, putting up the least little prayer to heaven that his dishonesty might be forgiven.

'I should be very happy to think that—after I have

told you her address in this secret way.' A smile of infinite mildness glimmered in Miss Birdseye's face, and she added: 'Well, I guess that will be your fate. She *has* affected so many. I would keep very quiet if I thought that. Yes, she will bring you round.'

'I will let you know as soon as she does,' Basil Ransom said. 'Here is your car at last.'

'Well, I believe in the victory of the truth. I won't say anything.' And she suffered the young man to lead her to the car, which had now stopped at their corner.

'I hope very much I shall see you again,' he remarked, as they went.

'Well, I am always round the streets, in Boston.' And while, lifting and pushing, he was helping again to insert her into the oblong receptacle, she turned a little and repeated, 'She *will* affect you! If that's to be your secret, I will keep it,' Ransom heard her subjoin. He raised his hat and waved her a farewell, but she didn't see him; she was squeezing further into the car and making the discovery that this time it was full and there was no seat for her. Surely, however, he said to himself, every man in the place would offer his own to such an innocent old dear.

XXIV.

A LITTLE more than an hour after this he stood in the parlour of Doctor Tarrant's suburban residence, in Monadnoc Place. He had induced a juvenile maid-servant, by an appeal somewhat impassioned, to let the ladies know that he was there; and she had returned, after a long absence, to say that Miss Tarrant would come down to him in a little while. He possessed himself, according to his wont, of the nearest book (it lay on the table, with an old magazine and a little japanned tray containing Tarrant's professional cards—his denomination as a mesmeric healer), and spent ten minutes in turning it over. It was a biography of Mrs. Ada T. P. Foat, the celebrated trance-lecturer, and was embellished by a portrait representing the lady with a surprised expression and innumerable ringlets. Ransom said to himself, after reading a few pages, that much ridicule had been cast upon Southern literature; but if that was a fair specimen of Northern!—and he threw it back upon the table with a gesture almost as contemptuous as if he had

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not known perfectly, after so long a residence in the North, that it was not, while he wondered whether this was the sort of thing Miss Tarrant had been brought up on. There was no other book to be seen, and he remembered to have read the magazine; so there was finally nothing for him, as the occupants of the house failed still to appear, but to stare before him, into the bright, bare, common little room, which was so hot that he wished to open a window, and of which an ugly, undraped cross-light seemed to have taken upon itself to reveal the poverty. Ransom, as I have mentioned, had not a high standard of comfort, and noticed little, usually, how people's houses were furnished—it was only when they were very pretty that he observed; but what he saw while he waited at Doctor Tarrant's made him say to himself that it was no wonder Verena liked better to live with Olive Chancellor. He even began to wonder whether it were for the sake of that superior softness she had cultivated Miss Chancellor's favour, and whether Mrs. Luna had been right about her being mercenary and insincere. So many minutes elapsed before she appeared that he had time to remember he really knew nothing to the contrary, as well as to consider the oddity (so great when one did consider it), of his coming out to Cambridge to see her, when he had only a few hours in Boston to spare, a year and a half after she had given him her very

casual invitation. She had not refused to receive him, at any rate; she was free to, if it didn't please her. And not only this, but she was apparently making herself fine in his honour, inasmuch as he heard a rapid footstep move to and fro above his head, and even, through the slightness which in Monadnoc Place did service for an upper floor, the sound of drawers and presses opened and closed. Some one was 'flying round,' as they said in Mississippi. At last the stairs creaked under a light tread, and the next moment a brilliant person came into the room.

His reminiscence of her had been very pretty; but now that she had developed and matured, the little prophetess was prettier still. Her splendid hair seemed to shine; her cheek and chin had a curve which struck him by its fineness; her eyes and lips were full of smiles and greetings. She had appeared to him before as a creature of brightness, but now she lighted up the place, she irradiated, she made everything that surrounded her of no consequence; dropping upon the shabby sofa with an effect as charming as if she had been a nymph sinking on a leopard-skin, and with the native sweetness of her voice forcing him to listen till she spoke again. It was not long before he perceived that this added lustre was simply success; she was young and tender still, but the sound of a great applauding audience had been in her ears; it formed an element in which she

felt buoyant and floated. Still, however, her glance was as pure as it was direct, and that fantastic fairness hung about her which had made an impression on him of old, and which reminded him of unworldly places—he didn't know where—convent-cloisters or vales of Arcady. At that other time she had been parti-coloured and bedizened, and she had always an air of costume, only now her costume was richer and more chastened. It was her line, her condition, part of her expression. If at Miss Birdseye's, and afterwards in Charles Street, she might have been a rope-dancer, to-day she made a 'scene' of the mean little room in Monadnoc Place, such a scene as a prima donna makes of daubed canvas and dusty boards. She addressed Basil Ransom as if she had seen him the other week and his merits were fresh to her, though she let him, while she sat smiling at him, explain in his own rather ceremonious way why it was he had presumed to call upon her on so slight an acquaintance—on an invitation which she herself had had more than time to forget. His explanation, as a finished and satisfactory thing, quite broke down; there was no more impressive reason than that he had simply wished to see her. He became aware that this motive loomed large, and that her listening smile, innocent as it was, in the Arcadian manner, of mockery, seemed to accuse him of not having the courage of his inclination. He had alluded

especially to their meeting at Miss Chancellor's; there it was that she had told him she should be glad to see him in her home.

'Oh yes, I remember perfectly, and I remember quite as well seeing you at Miss Birdseye's the night before. I made a speech—don't you remember? That was delightful.'

'It was delightful indeed,' said Basil Ransom.

'I don't mean my speech; I mean the whole thing. It was then I made Miss Chancellor's acquaintance. I don't know whether you know how we work together. She has done so much for me.'

'Do you still make speeches?' Ransom asked, conscious, as soon as he had uttered it, that the question was below the mark.

'Still? Why, I should hope so; it's all I'm good for! It's my life—or it's going to be. And it's Miss Chancellor's too. We are determined to do something.'

'And does she make speeches too?'

'Well, she makes mine—or the best part of them. She tells me what to say—the real things, the strong things. It's Miss Chancellor as much as me!' said the singular girl, with a generous complacency which was yet half ludicrous.

'I should like to hear you again,' Basil Ransom rejoined.

'Well, you must come some night. You will have plenty of chances. We are going on from triumph to triumph.'

Her brightness, her self-possession, her air of being a public character, her mixture of the girlish and the comprehensive, startled and confounded her visitor, who felt that if he had come to gratify his curiosity he should be in danger of going away still more curious than satiated. She added in her gay, friendly, trustful tone—the tone of facile intercourse, the tone in which happy, flower-crowned maidens may have talked to sunburnt young men in the golden age—'I am very familiar with your name; Miss Chancellor has told me all about you.'

'All about me?' Ransom raised his black eyebrows. 'How could she do that? She doesn't know anything about me!'

'Well, she told me you are a great enemy to our movement. Isn't that true? I think you expressed some unfavourable idea that day I met you at her house.'

'If you regard me as an enemy, it's very kind of you to receive me.'

'Oh, a great many gentlemen call,' Verena said, calmly and brightly. 'Some call simply to inquire. Some call because they have heard of me, or been present on some occasion when I have moved them. Every one is so interested.'

'And you have been in Europe,' Ransom remarked, in a moment.

'Oh yes, we went over to see if they were in advance. We had a magnificent time—we saw all the leaders.'

'The leaders?' Ransom repeated.

'Of the emancipation of our sex. There are gentlemen there, as well as ladies. Olive had splendid introductions in all countries, and we conversed with all the earnest people. We heard much that was suggestive. And as for Europe!'—and the young lady paused, smiling at him and ending in a happy sigh, as if there were more to say on the subject than she could attempt on such short notice.

'I suppose it's very attractive,' said Ransom, encouragingly.

'It's just a dream!'

'And did you find that they were in advance?'

'Well, Miss Chancellor thought they were. She was surprised at some things we observed, and concluded that perhaps she hadn't done the Europeans justice—she has got such an open mind, it's as wide as the sea!—while I incline to the opinion that on the whole *we* make the better show. The state of the movement there reflects their general culture, and their general culture is higher than ours (I mean taking the term in its broadest sense). On the other hand, the *special* condition—moral, social,

personal—of our sex seems to me to be superior in this country; I mean regarded in relation—in proportion as it were—to the social phase at large. I must add that we did see some noble specimens over there. In England we met some lovely women, highly cultivated, and of immense organising power. In France we saw some wonderful, contagious types; we passed a delightful evening with the celebrated Marie Verneuil; she was released from prison, you know, only a few weeks before. Our total impression was that it is only a question of time—the future is ours, But everywhere we heard one cry—"How long, O Lord, how long?"'

Basil Ransom listened to this considerable statement with a feeling which, as the current of Miss Tarrant's facile utterance flowed on, took the form of an hilarity charmed into stillness by the fear of losing something. There was indeed a sweet comicality in seeing this pretty girl sit there and, in answer to a casual, civil inquiry, drop into oratory as a natural thing. Had she forgotten where she was, and did she take him for a full house? She had the same turns and cadences, almost the same gestures, as if she had been on the platform; and the great queerness of it was that, with such a manner, she should escape being odious. She was not odious, she was delightful; she was not dogmatic, she was genial. No wonder she was a success, if she

speechified as a bird sings! Ransom could see, too, from her easy lapse, how the lecture-tone was the thing in the world with which, by education, by association, she was most familiar. He didn't know what to make of her; she was an astounding young phenomenon. The other time came back to him afresh, and how she had stood up at Miss Birdseye's; it occurred to him that an element, here, had been wanting. Several moments after she had ceased speaking he became conscious that the expression of his face presented a perceptible analogy to a broad grin. He changed his posture, saying the first thing that came into his head. 'I presume you do without your father now.'

'Without my father?'

'To set you going, as he did that time I heard you.'

'Oh, I see; you thought I had begun a lecture!' And she laughed, in perfect good humour. 'They tell me I speak as I talk, so I suppose I talk as I speak. But you mustn't put me on what I saw and heard in Europe. That's to be the title of an address I am now preparing, by the way. Yes, I don't depend on father any more,' she went on, while Ransom's sense of having said too sarcastic a thing was deepened by her perfect indifference to it. 'He finds his patients draw off about enough, any way. But I owe him everything; if it hadn't been for him, no one would

ever have known I had a gift—not even myself. He started me so, once for all, that I now go alone.'

'You go beautifully,' said Ransom, wanting to say something agreeable, and even respectfully tender, to her, but troubled by the fact that there was nothing he could say that didn't sound rather like chaff. There was no resentment in her, however, for in a moment she said to him, as quickly as it occurred to her, in the manner of a person repairing an accidental omission, 'It was very good of you to come so far.'

This was a sort of speech it was never safe to make to Ransom; there was no telling what retribution it might entail. 'Do you suppose any journey is too great, too wearisome, when it's a question of so great a pleasure?' On this occasion it was not worse than that.

'Well, people *have* come from other cities,' Verena answered, not with pretended humility, but with pretended pride. 'Do you know Cambridge?'

'This is the first time I have ever been here.'

'Well, I suppose you have heard of the university; it's so celebrated.'

'Yes—even in Mississippi. I suppose it's very fine.'

'I presume it is,' said Verena; 'but you can't expect me to speak with much admiration of an institution of which the doors are closed to our sex.'

'Do you then advocate a system of education in common?'

'I advocate equal rights, equal opportunities, equal privileges. So does Miss Chancellor,' Verena added, with just a perceptible air of feeling that her declaration needed support.

'Oh, I thought what she wanted was simply a different inequality—simply to turn out the men altogether,' Ransom said.

'Well, she thinks we have great arrears to make up. I do tell her, sometimes, that what she desires is not only justice but vengeance. I think she admits that,' Verena continued, with a certain solemnity. The subject, however, held her but an instant, and before Ransom had time to make any comment, she went on, in a different tone: 'You don't mean to say you live in Mississippi *now?* Miss Chancellor told me when you were in Boston before, that you had located in New York.' She persevered in this reference to himself, for when he had assented to her remark about New York, she asked him whether he had quite given up the South.

'Given it up—the poor, dear, desolate old South? Heaven forbid!' Basil Ransom exclaimed.

She looked at him for a moment with an added softness. 'I presume it is natural you should love your home. But

I am afraid you think I don't love mine much; I have been here—for so long—so little. Miss Chancellor *has* absorbed me—there is no doubt about that. But it's a pity I wasn't with her to-day.' Ransom made no answer to this; he was incapable of telling Miss Tarrant that if she had been he would not have called upon her. It was not, indeed, that he was not incapable of hypocrisy, for when she had asked him if he had seen his cousin the night before, and he had replied that he hadn't seen her at all, and she had exclaimed with a candour which the next minute made her blush, 'Ah, you don't mean to say you haven't forgiven her!'—after this he put on a look of innocence sufficient to carry off the inquiry, 'Forgiven her for what?'

Verena coloured at the sound of her own words. 'Well, I could see how much she felt, that time at her house.'

'What did she feel?' Basil Ransom asked, with the natural provokingness of a man.

I know not whether Verena was provoked, but she answered with more spirit than sequence: 'Well, you know you *did* pour contempt on us, ever so much; I could see how it worked Olive up. Are you not going to see her at all?'

'Well, I shall think about that; I am here only for

three or four days,' said Ransom, smiling as men smile when they are perfectly unsatisfactory.

It is very possible that Verena was provoked, inaccessible as she was, in a general way, to irritation; for she rejoined in a moment, with a little deliberate air: 'Well, perhaps it's as well you shouldn't go, if you haven't changed at all.'

'I haven't changed at all,' said the young man, smiling still, with his elbows on the arms of his chair, his shoulders pushed up a little, and his thin brown hands interlocked in front of him.

'Well, I have had visitors who were quite opposed!' Verena announced, as if such news could not possibly alarm her. Then she added, 'How then did you know I was out here?'

'Miss Birdseye told me.'

'Oh, I am so glad you went to see *her!*' the girl cried, speaking again with the impetuosity of a moment before.

'I didn't go to see her. I met her in the street, just as she was leaving Miss Chancellor's door. I spoke to her, and accompanied her some distance. I passed that way because I knew it was the direct way to Cambridge—from the Common—and I was coming out to see you any way—on the chance.'

'On the chance?' Verena repeated.

'Yes; Mrs. Luna, in New York, told me you were sometimes here, and I wanted, at any rate, to make the attempt to find you.'

It may be communicated to the reader that it was very agreeable to Verena to learn that her visitor had made this arduous pilgrimage (for she knew well enough how people in Boston regarded a winter journey to the academic suburb) with only half the prospect of a reward; but her pleasure was mixed with other feelings, or at least with the consciousness that the whole situation was rather less simple than the elements of her life had been hitherto. There was the germ of disorder in this invidious distinction which Mr. Ransom had suddenly made between Olive Chancellor, who was related to him by blood, and herself, who had never been related to him in any way whatever. She knew Olive by this time well enough to wish not to reveal it to her, and yet it would be something quite new for her to undertake to conceal such an incident as her having spent an hour with Mr. Ransom during a flying visit he had made to Boston. She had spent hours with other gentlemen, whom Olive didn't see; but that was different, because her friend knew about her doing it and didn't care, in regard to the persons—didn't care, that is, as she would care in this case. It was vivid to Verena's

mind that now Olive *would* care. She had talked about Mr. Burrage, and Mr. Pardon, and even about some gentlemen in Europe, and she had not (after the first few days, a year and a half before) talked about Mr. Ransom.

Nevertheless there were reasons, clear to Verena's view, for wishing either that he would go and see Olive or would keep away from *her;* and the responsibility of treating the fact that he had not so kept away as a secret seemed the greater, perhaps, in the light of this other fact, that so far as simply seeing Mr. Ransom went—why, she quite liked it. She had remembered him perfectly after their two former meetings, superficial as their contact then had been; she had thought of him at moments and wondered whether she should like him if she were to know him better. Now, at the end of twenty minutes, she did know him better, and found that he had rather a curious, but still a pleasant way. There he was, at any rate, and she didn't wish his call to be spoiled by any uncomfortable implication of consequences. So she glanced off, at the touch of Mrs. Luna's name; it seemed to afford relief. 'Oh yes, Mrs. Luna—isn't she fascinating?'

Ransom hesitated a little. 'Well, no, I don't think she is.'

'You ought to like her—she hates our movement!' And Verena asked, further, numerous questions about the

brilliant Adeline; whether he saw her often, whether she went out much, whether she was admired in New York, whether he thought her very handsome. He answered to the best of his ability, but soon made the reflection that he had not come out to Monadnoc Place to talk about Mrs. Luna; in consequence of which, to change the subject (as well as to acquit himself of a social duty), he began to speak of Verena's parents, to express regret that Mrs. Tarrant had been sick, and fear that he was not to have the pleasure of seeing her. 'She is a great deal better,' Verena said; 'but she's lying down; she lies down a great deal when she has got nothing else to do. Mother's very peculiar,' she added in a moment; 'she lies down when she feels well and happy, and when she's sick she walks about—she roams all round the house. If you hear her on the stairs a good deal, you can be pretty sure she's very bad. She'll be very much interested to hear about you after you have left.'

Ransom glanced at his watch. 'I hope I am not staying too long—that I am not taking you away from her.'

'Oh no; she likes visitors, even when she can't see them. If it didn't take her so long to rise, she would have been down here by this time. I suppose you think she has missed me, since I have been so absorbed. Well, so she

has, but she knows it's for my good. She would make any sacrifice for affection.'

The fancy suddenly struck Ransom of asking, in response to this, 'And you? would you make any?'

Verena gave him a bright natural stare. 'Any sacrifice for affection?' She thought a moment, and then she said: 'I don't think I have a right to say, because I have never been asked. I don't remember ever to have had to make a sacrifice—not an important one.'

'Lord! you must have had a happy life!'

'I have been very fortunate, I know that. I don't know what to do when I think how some women—how most women—suffer. But I must not speak of that,' she went on, with her smile coming back to her. 'If you oppose our movement, you won't want to hear of the suffering of women!'

'The suffering of women is the suffering of all humanity,' Ransom returned. 'Do you think any movement is going to stop that—or all the lectures from now to doomsday? We are born to suffer—and to bear it, like decent people.'

'Oh, I adore heroism!' Verena interposed.

'And as for women,' Ransom went on, 'they have one source of happiness that is closed to us—the consciousness that their presence here below lifts half the load of *our* suffering.'

Verena thought this very graceful, but she was not sure it was not rather sophistical; she would have liked to have Olive's judgment upon it. As that was not possible for the present, she abandoned the question (since learning that Mr. Ransom had passed over Olive, to come to her, she had become rather fidgety), and inquired of the young man, irrelevantly, whether he knew any one else in Cambridge.

'Not a creature; as I tell you, I have never been here before. Your image alone attracted me; this charming interview will be henceforth my only association with the place.'

'It's a pity you couldn't have a few more,' said Verena, musingly.

'A few more interviews? I should be unspeakably delighted!'

'A few more associations. Did you see the colleges as you came?'

'I had a glimpse of a large enclosure, with some big buildings. Perhaps I can look at them better as I go back to Boston.'

'Oh yes, you ought to see them—they have improved so much of late. The inner life, of course, is the greatest interest, but there is some fine architecture, if you are not familiar with Europe.' She paused a moment, looking at him with an eye that seemed to brighten, and continued

quickly, like a person who had collected herself for a little jump, 'If you would like to walk round a little, I shall be very glad to show you.'

'To walk round—with you to show me?' Ransom repeated. 'My dear Miss Tarrant, it would be the greatest privilege—the greatest happiness—of my life. What a delightful idea—what an ideal guide!'

Verena got up; she would go and put on her hat; he must wait a little. Her offer had a frankness and friendliness which gave him a new sensation, and he could not know that as soon as she had made it (though she had hesitated too, with a moment of intense reflection), she seemed to herself strangely reckless. An impulse pushed her; she obeyed it with her eyes open. She felt as a girl feels when she commits her first conscious indiscretion. She had done many things before which many people would have called indiscreet, but that quality had not even faintly belonged to them in her own mind; she had done them in perfect good faith and with a remarkable absence of palpitation. This superficially ingenuous proposal to walk around the colleges with Mr. Ransom had really another colour; it deepened the ambiguity of her position, by reason of a prevision which I shall presently mention. If Olive was not to know that she had seen him, this extension of their interview would double her secret. And yet, while she saw

it grow—this monstrous little mystery—she couldn't feel sorry that she was going out with Olive's cousin. As I have already said, she had become nervous. She went to put on her hat, but at the door of the room she stopped, turned round, and presented herself to her visitor with a small spot in either cheek, which had appeared there within the instant. 'I have suggested this, because it seems to me I ought to do something for you—in return,' she said. 'It's nothing, simply sitting there with me. And we haven't got anything else. This is our only hospitality. And the day seems so splendid.'

The modesty, the sweetness, of this little explanation, with a kind of intimated desire, constituting almost an appeal, for rightness, which seemed to pervade it, left a fragrance in the air after she had vanished. Ransom walked up and down the room, with his hands in his pockets, under the influence of it, without taking up even once the book about Mrs. Foat. He occupied the time in asking himself by what perversity of fate or of inclination such a charming creature was ranting upon platforms and living in Olive Chancellor's pocket, or how a ranter and sycophant could possibly be so engaging. And she was so disturbingly beautiful, too. This last fact was not less evident when she came down arranged for their walk. They left the house, and as they proceeded he remembered

that he had asked himself earlier how he could do honour to such a combination of leisure and ethereal mildness as he had waked up to that morning—a mildness that seemed the very breath of his own latitude. This question was answered now; to do exactly what he was doing at that moment was an observance sufficiently festive.

XXV.

They passed through two or three small, short streets, which, with their little wooden houses, with still more wooden door-yards, looked as if they had been constructed by the nearest carpenter and his boy—a sightless, soundless, interspaced, embryonic region—and entered a long avenue which, fringed on either side with fresh villas, offering themselves trustfully to the public, had the distinction of a wide pavement of neat red brick. The new paint on the square detached houses shone afar off in the transparent air: they had, on top, little cupolas and belvederes, in front a pillared piazza, made bare by the indoor life of winter, on either side a bow-window or two, and everywhere an embellishment of scallops, brackets, cornices, wooden flourishes. They stood, for the most part, on small eminences, lifted above the impertinence of hedge or paling, well up before the world, with all the good conscience which in many cases came, as Ransom saw (and he had noticed the same ornament when he traversed with Olive

the quarter of Boston inhabited by Miss Birdseye), from a silvered number, affixed to the glass above the door, in figures huge enough to be read by the people who, in the periodic horse-cars, travelled along the middle of the avenue. It was to these glittering badges that many of the houses on either side owed their principal identity. One of the horse-cars now advanced in the straight, spacious distance; it was almost the only object that animated the prospect, which, in its large cleanness, its implication of strict business-habits on the part of all the people who were not there, Ransom thought very impressive. As he went on with Verena he asked her about the Women's Convention, the year before; whether it had accomplished much work and she had enjoyed it.

'What do you care about the work it accomplished?' said the girl. 'You don't take any interest in that.'

'You mistake my attitude. I don't like it, but I greatly fear it.'

In answer to this Verena gave a free laugh. 'I don't believe you fear much!'

'The bravest men have been afraid of women. Won't you even tell me whether you enjoyed it? I am told you made an immense sensation there—that you leaped into fame.'

Verena never waved off an allusion to her ability, her

eloquence; she took it seriously, without any flutter or protest, and had no more manner about it than if it concerned the goddess Minerva. 'I believe I attracted considerable attention; of course, that's what Olive wants —it paves the way for future work. I have no doubt I reached many that wouldn't have been reached otherwise. They think that's my great use—to take hold of the outsiders, as it were; of those who are prejudiced or thoughtless, or who don't care about anything unless it's amusing. I wake up the attention.'

'That's the class to which I belong,' Ransom said. 'Am I not an outsider? I wonder whether you would have reached me—or waked up my attention!'

Verena was silent awhile, as they walked; he heard the light click of her boots on the smooth bricks. Then—'I think I *have* waked it up a little,' she replied, looking straight before her.

'Most assuredly! You have made me wish tremendously to contradict you.'

'Well, that's a good sign.'

'I suppose it was very exciting—your convention,' Ransom went on, in a moment; 'the sort of thing you would miss very much if you were to return to the ancient fold.'

'The ancient fold, you say very well, where women were

slaughtered like sheep! Oh, last June, for a week, we just quivered! There were delegates from every State and every city; we lived in a crowd of people and of ideas; the heat was intense, the weather magnificent, and great thoughts and brilliant sayings flew round like darting fire-flies. Olive had six celebrated, high-minded women staying in her house—two in a room; and in the summer evenings we sat in the open windows, in her parlour, looking out on the bay, with the lights gleaming in the water, and talked over the doings of the morning, the speeches, the incidents, the fresh contributions to the cause. We had some tremendously earnest discussions, which it would have been a benefit to you to hear, or any man who doesn't think that we can rise to the highest point. Then we had some refreshment—we consumed quantities of ice-cream!' said Verena, in whom the note of gaiety alternated with that of earnestness, almost of exaltation, in a manner which seemed to Basil Ransom absolutely and fascinatingly original. 'Those were great nights!' she added, between a laugh and a sigh.

Her description of the convention put the scene before him vividly; he seemed to see the crowded, overheated hall, which he was sure was filled with carpet-baggers, to hear flushed women, with loosened bonnet-strings, forcing thin voices into ineffectual shrillness. It made him angry,

and all the more angry, that he hadn't a reason, to think of the charming creature at his side being mixed up with such elements, pushed and elbowed by them, conjoined with them in emulation, in unsightly strainings and clappings and shoutings, in wordy, windy iteration of inanities. Worst of all was the idea that she should have expressed such a congregation to itself so acceptably, have been acclaimed and applauded by hoarse throats, have been lifted up, to all the vulgar multitude, as the queen of the occasion. He made the reflection, afterwards, that he was singularly ill-grounded in his wrath, inasmuch as it was none of his business what use Miss Tarrant chose to make of her energies, and, in addition to this, nothing else was to have been expected of her. But that reflection was absent now, and in its absence he saw only the fact that his companion had been odiously perverted. 'Well, Miss Tarrant,' he said, with a deeper seriousness than showed in his voice, 'I am forced to the painful conclusion that you are simply ruined.'

'Ruined? Ruined yourself!'

'Oh, I know the kind of women that Miss Chancellor had at her house, and what a group you must have made when you looked out at the Back Bay! It depresses me very much to think of it.'

'We made a lovely, interesting group, and, if we had

had a spare minute we would have been photographed,' Verena said.

This led him to ask her if she had ever subjected herself to the process; and she answered that a photographer had been after her as soon as she got back from Europe, and that she had sat for him, and that there were certain shops in Boston where her portrait could be obtained. She gave him this information very simply, without pretence of vagueness of knowledge, spoke of the matter rather respectfully, indeed, as if it might be of some importance; and when he said that he should go and buy one of the little pictures as soon as he returned to town, contented herself with replying, 'Well, be sure you pick out a good one!' He had not been altogether without a hope that she would offer to give him one, with her name written beneath, which was a mode of acquisition he would greatly have preferred; but this, evidently, had not occurred to her, and now, as they went further, her thought was following a different train. That was proved by her remarking, at the end of a silence, inconsequently, 'Well, it showed I have a great use!' As he stared, wondering what she meant, she explained that she referred to the brilliancy of her success at the convention. 'It proved I have a great use,' she repeated, 'and that is all I care for!'

'The use of a truly amiable woman is to make some honest

man happy,' Ransom said, with a sententiousness of which he was perfectly aware.

It was so marked that it caused her to stop short in the middle of the broad walk, while she looked at him with shining eyes. 'See here, Mr. Ransom, do you know what strikes me?' she exclaimed. 'The interest you take in me isn't really controversial—a bit. It's quite personal!' She was the most extraordinary girl; she could speak such words as those without the smallest look of added consciousness coming into her face, without the least supposable intention of coquetry, or any visible purpose of challenging the young man to say more.

'My interest in you—my interest in you,' he began. Then hesitating, he broke off suddenly. 'It is certain your discovery doesn't make it any less!'

'Well, that's better,' she went on; 'for we needn't dispute.'

He laughed at the way she arranged it, and they presently reached the irregular group of heterogeneous buildings—chapels, dormitories, libraries, halls—which, scattered among slender trees, over a space reserved by means of a low rustic fence, rather than inclosed (for Harvard knows nothing either of the jealousy or the dignity of high walls and guarded gateways), constitutes the great university of Massachusetts. The yard, or college-precinct, is traversed by a number of straight little paths, over which,

at certain hours of the day, a thousand undergraduates, with books under their arm and youth in their step, flit from one school to another. Verena Tarrant knew her way round, as she said to her companion; it was not the first time she had taken an admiring visitor to see the local monuments. Basil Ransom, walking with her from point to point, admired them all, and thought several of them exceedingly quaint and venerable. The rectangular structures of old red brick especially gratified his eye; the afternoon sun was yellow on their homely faces; their windows showed a peep of flower-pots and bright-coloured curtains; they wore an expression of scholastic quietude, and exhaled for the young Mississippian a tradition, an antiquity. 'This is the place where I ought to have been,' he said to his charming guide. 'I should have had a good time if I had been able to study here.'

'Yes; I presume you feel yourself drawn to any place where ancient prejudices are garnered up,' she answered, not without archness. 'I know by the stand you take about our cause that you share the superstitions of the old bookmen. You ought to have been at one of those really mediæval universities that we saw on the other side, at Oxford, or Göttingen, or Padua. You would have been in perfect sympathy with their spirit.'

'Well, I don't know much about those old haunts,'

Ransom rejoined. 'I reckon this is good enough for me. And then it would have had the advantage that your residence isn't far, you know.'

'Oh, I guess we shouldn't have seen you much at my residence! As you live in New York, you come, but here you wouldn't; that is always the way.' With this light philosophy Verena beguiled the transit to the library, into which she introduced her companion with the air of a person familiar with the sanctified spot. This edifice, a diminished copy of the chapel of King's College, at the greater Cambridge, is a rich and impressive institution; and as he stood there, in the bright, heated stillness, which seemed suffused with the odour of old print and old bindings, and looked up into the high, light vaults that hung over quiet book-laden galleries, alcoves and tables, and glazed cases where rarer treasures gleamed more vaguely, over busts of benefactors and portraits of worthies, bowed heads of working students and the gentle creak of passing messengers—as he took possession, in a comprehensive glance, of the wealth and wisdom of the place, he felt more than ever the soreness of an opportunity missed; but he abstained from expressing it (it was too deep for that), and in a moment Verena had introduced him to a young lady, a friend of hers, who, as she explained, was working on the catalogue, and whom she had asked for on

entering the library, at a desk where another young lady was occupied. Miss Catching, the first-mentioned young lady, presented herself with promptness, offered Verena a low-toned but appreciative greeting, and, after a little, undertook to explain to Ransom the mysteries of the catalogue, which consisted of a myriad little cards, disposed alphabetically in immense chests of drawers. Ransom was deeply interested, and as, with Verena, he followed Miss Catching about (she was so good as to show them the establishment in all its ramifications), he considered with attention the young lady's fair ringlets and refined, anxious expression, saying to himself that this was in the highest degree a New England type. Verena found an opportunity to mention to him that she was wrapped up in the cause, and there was a moment during which he was afraid that his companion would expose him to her as one of its traducers; but there was that in Miss Catching's manner (and in the influence of the lofty halls), which deprecated loud pleasantry, and seemed to say, moreover, that if she were treated to such a revelation she should not know under what letter to range it.

'Now there is one place where perhaps it would be indelicate to take a Mississippian,' Verena said, after this episode. 'I mean the great place that towers above the others—that big building with the beautiful pinnacles,

which you see from every point.' But Basil Ransom had heard of the great Memorial Hall; he knew what memories it enshrined, and the worst that he should have to suffer there; and the ornate, overtopping structure, which was the finest piece of architecture he had ever seen, had moreover solicited his enlarged curiosity for the last half-hour. He thought there was rather too much brick about it, but it was buttressed, cloistered, turreted, dedicated, superscribed, as he had never seen anything; though it didn't look old, it looked significant; it covered a large area, and it sprang majestic into the winter air. It was detached from the rest of the collegiate group, and stood in a grassy triangle of its own. As he approached it with Verena she suddenly stopped, to decline responsibility. 'Now mind, if you don't like what's inside, it isn't my fault.'

He looked at her an instant, smiling. 'Is there anything against Mississippi?'

'Well, no, I don't think she is mentioned. But there is great praise of our young men in the war.'

'It says they were brave, I suppose.'

'Yes, it says so in Latin.'

'Well, so they were—I know something about that,' Basil Ransom said. 'I must be brave enough to face them—it isn't the first time.' And they went up the low steps and passed into the tall doors. The Memorial Hall

of Harvard consists of three main divisions: one of them a theatre, for academic ceremonies; another a vast refectory, covered with a timbered roof, hung about with portraits and lighted by stained windows, like the halls of the colleges of Oxford; and the third, the most interesting, a chamber high, dim, and severe, consecrated to the sons of the university who fell in the long Civil War. Ransom and his companion wandered from one part of the building to another, and stayed their steps at several impressive points; but they lingered longest in the presence of the white, ranged tablets, each of which, in its proud, sad clearness, is inscribed with the name of a student-soldier. The effect of the place is singularly noble and solemn, and it is impossible to feel it without a lifting of the heart. It stands there for duty and honour, it speaks of sacrifice and example, seems a kind of temple to youth, manhood, generosity. Most of them were young, all were in their prime, and all of them had fallen; this simple idea hovers before the visitor and makes him read with tenderness each name and place—names often without other history, and forgotten Southern battles. For Ransom these things were not a challenge nor a taunt; they touched him with respect, with the sentiment of beauty. He was capable of being a generous foeman, and he forgot, now, the whole question of sides and parties; the simple emotion of the old fighting-

time came back to him, and the monument around him seemed an embodiment of that memory; it arched over friends as well as enemies, the victims of defeat as well as the sons of triumph.

'It is very beautiful—but I think it is very dreadful!' This remark, from Verena, called him back to the present. 'It's a real sin to put up such a building, just to glorify a lot of bloodshed. If it wasn't so majestic, I would have it pulled down.'

'That is delightful feminine logic!' Ransom answered. 'If, when women have the conduct of affairs, they fight as well as they reason, surely for them too we shall have to set up memorials.'

Verena retorted that they would reason so well they would have no need to fight—they would usher in the reign of peace. 'But this is very peaceful too,' she added, looking about her; and she sat down on a low stone ledge, as if to enjoy the influence of the scene. Ransom left her alone for ten minutes; he wished to take another look at the inscribed tablets, and read again the names of the various engagements, at several of which he had been present. When he came back to her she greeted him abruptly, with a question which had no reference to the solemnity of the spot. 'If Miss Birdseye knew you were coming out to see me, can't *she* easily tell Olive?

Then won't Olive make her reflections about your neglect of herself?'

'I don't care for her reflections. At any rate, I asked Miss Birdseye, as a favour, not to mention to her that she had met me,' Ransom added.

Verena was silent a moment. 'Your logic is almost as good as a woman's. Do change your mind and go to see her now,' she went on. 'She will probably be at home by the time you get to Charles Street. If she was a little strange, a little stiff with you before (I know just how she must have been), all that will be different to-day.'

'Why will it be different?'

'Oh, she will be easier, more genial, much softer.'

'I don't believe it,' said Ransom; and his scepticism seemed none the less complete because it was light and smiling.

'She is much happier now—she can afford not to mind you.'

'Not to mind me? That's a nice inducement for a gentleman to go and see a lady!'

'Well, she will be more gracious, because she feels now that she is more successful.'

'You mean because she has brought you out? Oh, I have no doubt that has cleared the air for her immensely, and you have improved her very much. But I have got a

charming impression out here, and I have no wish to put another—which won't be charming, anyhow you arrange it—on top of it.'

'Well, she will be sure to know you have been round here, at any rate,' Verena rejoined.

'How will she know, unless you tell her?'

'I tell her everything,' said the girl; and now as soon as she had spoken, she blushed. He stood before her, tracing a figure on the mosaic pavement with his cane, conscious that in a moment they had become more intimate. They were discussing their affairs, which had nothing to do with the heroic symbols that surrounded them; but their affairs had suddenly grown so serious that there was no want of decency in their lingering there for the purpose. The implication that his visit might remain as a secret between them made them both feel it differently. To ask her to keep it so would have been, as it seemed to Ransom, a liberty, and, moreover, he didn't care so much as that; but if she were to prefer to do so such a preference would only make him consider the more that his expedition had been a success.

'Oh, then, you can tell her this!' he said in a moment.

'If I shouldn't, it would be the first——' And Verena checked herself.

'You must arrange that with your conscience,' Ransom went on, laughing.

They came out of the hall, passed down the steps, and emerged from the Delta, as that portion of the college precinct is called. The afternoon had begun to wane, but the air was filled with a pink brightness, and there was a cool, pure smell, a vague breath of spring.

'Well, if I don't tell Olive, then you must leave me here,' said Verena, stopping in the path and putting out a hand of farewell.

'I don't understand. What has that to do with it? Besides I thought you said you *must* tell,' Ransom added. In playing with the subject this way, in enjoying her visible hesitation, he was slightly conscious of a man's brutality—of being pushed by an impulse to test her good-nature, which seemed to have no limit. It showed no sign of perturbation as she answered:

'Well, I want to be free—to do as I think best. And, if there is a chance of my keeping it back, there mustn't be anything more—there must not, Mr. Ransom, really.'

'Anything more? Why, what are you afraid there will be—if I should simply walk home with you?'

'I must go alone, I must hurry back to mother,' she said, for all reply. And she again put out her hand, which he had not taken before.

Of course he took it now, and even held it a moment; he didn't like being dismissed, and was thinking of pretexts to linger. 'Miss Birdseye said you would convert me, but you haven't yet,' it came into his head to say.

'You can't tell yet; wait a little. My influence is peculiar; it sometimes comes out a long time afterwards!' This speech, on Verena's part, was evidently perfunctory, and the grandeur of her self-reference jocular; she was much more serious when she went on quickly, 'Do you mean to say Miss Birdseye promised you that?'

'Oh yes. Talk about influence! you should have seen the influence I obtained over her.'

'Well, what good will it do, if I'm going to tell Olive about your visit?'

'Well, you see, I think she hopes you won't. She believes you are going to convert me privately—so that I shall blaze forth, suddenly, out of the darkness of Mississippi, as a first-class proselyte: very effective and dramatic.'

Verena struck Basil Ransom as constantly simple, but there were moments when her candour seemed to him preternatural. 'If I thought that would be the effect, I might make an exception,' she remarked, speaking as if such a result were, after all, possible.

'Oh, Miss Tarrant, you will convert me enough, any way,' said the young man.

'Enough? What do you mean by enough?'

'Enough to make me terribly unhappy.'

She looked at him a moment, evidently not understanding; but she tossed him a retort at a venture, turned away, and took her course homeward. The retort was that if he should be unhappy it would serve him right—a form of words that committed her to nothing. As he returned to Boston he saw how curious he should be to learn whether she had betrayed him, as it were, to Miss Chancellor. He might learn through Mrs. Luna; that would almost reconcile him to going to see her again. Olive would mention it in writing to her sister, and Adeline would repeat the complaint. Perhaps she herself would even make him a scene about it; that would be, for him, part of the unhappiness he had foretold to Verena Tarrant.

XXVI.

'MRS. HENRY BURRAGE, at home Wednesday evening, March 26th, at half-past nine o'clock.' It was in consequence of having received a card with these words inscribed upon it that Basil Ransom presented himself, on the evening she had designated, at the house of a lady he had never heard of before. The account of the relation of effect to cause is not complete, however, unless I mention that the card bore, furthermore, in the left-hand lower corner, the words: 'An Address from Miss Verena Tarrant.' He had an idea (it came mainly from the look and even the odour of the engraved pasteboard), that Mrs. Burrage was a member of the fashionable world, and it was with considerable surprise that he found himself in such an element. He wondered what had induced a denizen of that fine air to send him an invitation; then he said to himself that, obviously, Verena Tarrant had simply requested that this should be done. Mrs. Henry Burrage, whoever she might be, had asked her if she shouldn't like some of her own

friends to be present, and she had said, Oh yes, and mentioned him in the happy group. She had been able to give Mrs. Burrage his address, for had it not been contained in the short letter he despatched to Monadnoc Place soon after his return from Boston, in which he thanked Miss Tarrant afresh for the charming hour she had enabled him to spend at Cambridge? She had not answered his letter at the time, but Mrs. Burrage's card was a very good answer. Such a missive deserved a rejoinder, and it was by way of rejoinder that he entered the street car which, on the evening of March 26th, was to deposit him at a corner adjacent to Mrs. Burrage's dwelling. He almost never went to evening parties (he knew scarcely any one who gave them, though Mrs. Luna had broken him in a little), and he was sure this occasion was of festive intention, would have nothing in common with the nocturnal 'exercises' at Miss Birdseye's; but he would have exposed himself to almost any social discomfort in order to see Verena Tarrant on the platform. The platform it evidently was to be—private if not public—since one was admitted by a ticket given away if not sold. He took his in his pocket, quite ready to present it at the door. It would take some time for me to explain the contradiction to the reader; but Basil Ransom's desire to be present at one of Verena's regular performances was not diminished by the fact that he

detested her views and thought the whole business a poor perversity. He understood her now very well (since his visit to Cambridge); he saw she was honest and natural; she had queer, bad lecture-blood in her veins, and a comically false idea of the aptitude of little girls for conducting movements; but her enthusiasm was of the purest, her illusions had a fragrance, and so far as the mania for producing herself personally was concerned, it had been distilled into her by people who worked her for ends which to Basil Ransom could only appear insane. She was a touching, ingenuous victim, unconscious of the pernicious forces which were hurrying her to her ruin. With this idea of ruin there had already associated itself in the young man's mind, the idea—a good deal more dim and incomplete—of rescue; and it was the disposition to confirm himself in the view that her charm was her own, and her fallacies, her absurdity, a mere reflection of unlucky circumstance, that led him to make an effort to behold her in the position in which he could least bear to think of her. Such a glimpse was all that was wanted to prove to him that she was a person for whom he might open an unlimited credit of tender compassion. He expected to suffer—to suffer deliciously.

By the time he had crossed Mrs. Burrage's threshold there was no doubt whatever in his mind that he was in the

fashionable world. It was embodied strikingly in the stout, elderly, ugly lady, dressed in a brilliant colour, with a twinkle of jewels and a bosom much uncovered, who stood near the door of the first room, and with whom the people passing in before him were shaking hands. Ransom made her a Mississippian bow, and she said she was delighted to see him, while people behind him pressed him forward. He yielded to the impulsion, and found himself in a great saloon, amid lights and flowers, where the company was dense, and there were more twinkling, smiling ladies, with uncovered bosoms. It was certainly the fashionable world, for there was no one there whom he had ever seen before. The walls of the room were covered with pictures—the very ceiling was painted and framed. The people pushed each other a little, edged about, advanced and retreated, looking at each other with differing faces—sometimes blandly, unperceivingly, sometimes with a harshness of contemplation, a kind of cruelty, Ransom thought; sometimes with sudden nods and grimaces, inarticulate murmurs, followed by a quick reaction, a sort of gloom. He was now absolutely certain that he was in the best society. He was carried further and further forward, and saw that another room stretched beyond the one he had entered, in which there was a sort of little stage, covered with a red cloth, and an immense collection of chairs, arranged in rows. He

became aware that people looked at him, as well as at each other, rather more, indeed, than at each other, and he wondered whether it were very visible in his appearance that his being there was a kind of exception. He didn't know how much his head looked over the heads of others, or that his brown complexion, fuliginous eye, and straight black hair, the leonine fall of which I mentioned in the first pages of this narrative, gave him that relief which, in the best society, has the great advantage of suggesting a topic. But there were other topics besides, as was proved by a fragment of conversation, between two ladies, which reached his ear while he stood rather wistfully wondering where Verena Tarrant might be.

'Are you a member?' one of the ladies said to the other. 'I didn't know you had joined.'

'Oh, I haven't; nothing would induce me.'

'That's not fair; you have all the fun and none of the responsibility.'

'Oh, the fun—the fun!' exclaimed the second lady.

'You needn't abuse us, or I will never invite you,' said the first.

'Well, I thought it was meant to be improving; that's all I mean; very good for the mind. Now, this woman to-night; isn't she from Boston?'

'Yes, I believe they have brought her on, just for this.'

'Well, you must be pretty desperate when you have got to go to Boston for your entertainment.'

'Well, there's a similar society there, and I never heard of their sending to New York.'

'Of course not, they think they have got everything. But doesn't it make your life a burden, thinking what you can possibly have?'

'Oh dear, no. I am going to have Professor Gougenheim—all about the Talmud. You must come.'

'Well, I'll come,' said the second lady; 'but nothing would induce me to be a regular member.'

Whatever the mystic circle might be, Ransom agreed with the second lady that regular membership must have terrors, and he admired her independence in such an artificial world. A considerable part of the company had now directed itself to the further apartment—people had begun to occupy the chairs, to confront the empty platform. He reached the wide doors, and saw that the place was a spacious music-room, decorated in white and gold, with a polished floor and marble busts of composers, on brackets attached to the delicate panels. He forbore to enter, however, being shy about taking a seat, and seeing that the ladies were arranging themselves first. He turned back into the first room, to wait till the audience had massed itself, conscious that even if he were behind every one he

should be able to make a long neck; and here, suddenly, in a corner, his eyes rested upon Olive Chancellor. She was seated a little apart, in an angle of the room, and she was looking straight at him; but as soon as she perceived that he saw her she dropped her eyes, giving no sign of recognition. Ransom hesitated a moment, but the next he went straight over to her. It had been in his mind that if Verena Tarrant was there, *she* would be there; an instinct told him that Miss Chancellor would not allow her dear friend to come to New York without her. It was very possible she meant to 'cut' him—especially if she knew of his having cut her, the other week, in Boston; but it was his duty to take for granted she would speak to him, until the contrary should be definitely proved. Though he had seen her only twice he remembered well how acutely shy she was capable of being, and he thought it possible one of these spasms had seized her at the present time.

When he stood before her he found his conjecture perfectly just; she was white with the intensity of her self-consciousness; she was altogether in a very uncomfortable state. She made no response to his offer to shake hands with her, and he saw that she would never go through that ceremony again. She looked up at him when he spoke to her, and her lips moved; but her face was intensely grave and her eye had almost a feverish light. She had evidently

got into her corner to be out of the way; he recognised in her the air of an interloper, as he had felt it in himself. The small sofa on which she had placed herself had the form to which the French give the name of *causeuse*; there was room on it for just another person, and Ransom asked her, with a cheerful accent, if he might sit down beside her. She turned towards him when he had done so, turned everything but her eyes, and opened and shut her fan while she waited for her fit of diffidence to pass away. Ransom himself did not wait; he took a jocular tone about their encounter, asking her if she had come to New York to rouse the people. She glanced round the room; the backs of Mrs. Burrage's guests, mainly, were presented to them, and their position was partly masked by a pyramid of flowers which rose from a pedestal close to Olive's end of the sofa and diffused a fragrance in the air.

'Do you call these the "people"?' she asked.

'I haven't the least idea. I don't know who any of them are, not even who Mrs. Henry Burrage is. I simply received an invitation.'

Miss Chancellor gave him no information on the point he had mentioned; she only said, in a moment: 'Do you go wherever you are invited?'

'Why, I go if I think I may find you there,' the young man replied, gallantly. 'My card mentioned that Miss

Tarrant would give an address, and I knew that wherever she is you are not far off. I have heard you are inseparable, from Mrs. Luna.'

'Yes, we are inseparable. That is exactly why I am here.'

'It's the fashionable world, then, you are going to stir up.'

Olive remained for some time with her eyes fastened to the floor; then she flashed them up at her interlocutor. 'It's a part of our life to go anywhere—to carry our work where it seems most needed. We have taught ourselves to stifle repulsion, distaste.'

'Oh, I think this is very amusing,' said Ransom. 'It's a beautiful house, and there are some very pretty faces. We haven't anything so brilliant in Mississippi.'

To everything he said Olive offered at first a momentary silence, but the worst of her shyness was apparently leaving her.

'Are you successful in New York? do you like it?' she presently asked, uttering the inquiry in a tone of infinite melancholy, as if the eternal sense of duty forced it from her lips.

'Oh, successful! I am not successful as you and Miss Tarrant are; for (to my barbaric eyes) it is a great sign of prosperity to be the heroines of an occasion like this.'

'Do I look like the heroine of an occasion?' asked Olive Chancellor, without an intention of humour, but with an effect that was almost comical.

'You would if you didn't hide yourself away. Are you not going into the other room to hear the speech? Everything is prepared.'

'I am going when I am notified—when I am invited.'

There was considerable majesty in her tone, and Ransom saw that something was wrong, that she felt neglected. To see that she was as ticklish with others as she had been with him made him feel forgiving, and there was in his manner a perfect disposition to forget their differences as he said, 'Oh, there is plenty of time; the place isn't half full yet.'

She made no direct rejoinder to this, but she asked him about his mother and sisters, what news he received from the South. 'Have they any happiness?' she inquired, rather as if she warned him to take care not to pretend they had. He neglected her warning to the point of saying that there was one happiness they always had—that of having learned not to think about it too much, and to make the best of their circumstances. She listened to this with an air of great reserve, and apparently thought he had wished to give her a lesson; for she suddenly broke out,

'You mean that you have traced a certain line for them, and that that's all you know about it!'

Ransom stared at her, surprised; he felt, now, that she would always surprise him. 'Ah, don't be rough with me,' he said, in his soft Southern voice; 'don't you remember how you knocked me about when I called on you in Boston?'

'You hold us in chains, and then, when we writhe in our agony, you say we don't behave prettily!' These words, which did not lessen Ransom's wonderment, were the young lady's answer to his deprecatory speech. She saw that he was honestly bewildered and that in a moment more he would laugh at her, as he had done a year and a half before (she remembered it as if it had been yesterday); and to stop that off, at any cost, she went on hurriedly—'If you listen to Miss Tarrant, you will know what I mean.'

'Oh, Miss Tarrant — Miss Tarrant!' And Basil Ransom's laughter came.

She had not escaped that mockery, after all, and she looked at him sharply now, her embarrassment having quite cleared up. 'What do you know about her? What observation have you had?'

Ransom met her eye, and for a moment they scrutinised each other. Did she know of his interview with Verena a month before, and was her reserve simply the wish to place

on him the burden of declaring that he had been to Boston since they last met, and yet had not called in Charles Street? He thought there was suspicion in her face; but in regard to Verena she would always be suspicious. If he had done at that moment just what would gratify him he would have said to her that he knew a great deal about Miss Tarrant, having lately had a long walk and talk with her; but he checked himself, with the reflection that if Verena had not betrayed him it would be very wrong in him to betray her. The sweetness of the idea that she should have thought the episode of his visit to Monadnoc Place worth placing under the rose, was quenched for the moment in his regret at not being able to let his disagreeable cousin know that he had passed *her* over. 'Don't you remember my hearing her speak that night at Miss Birdseye's?' he said, presently. 'And I met her the next day at your house, you know.'

'She has developed greatly since then,' Olive remarked drily; and Ransom felt sure that Verena had held her tongue.

At this moment a gentleman made his way through the clusters of Mrs. Burrage's guests and presented himself to Olive. 'If you will do me the honour to take my arm I will find a good seat for you in the other room. It's getting to be time for Miss Tarrant to reveal herself. I

have been taking her into the picture-room; there were some things she wanted to see. She is with my mother now,' he added, as if Miss Chancellor's grave face constituted a sort of demand for an explanation of her friend's absence. 'She said she was a little nervous; so I thought we would just move about.'

'It's the first time I have ever heard of that!' said Olive Chancellor, preparing to surrender herself to the young man's guidance. He told her that he had reserved the best seat for her; it was evidently his desire to conciliate her, to treat her as a person of importance. Before leading her away, he shook hands with Ransom and remarked that he was very glad to see him; and Ransom saw that he must be the master of the house, though he could scarcely be the son of the stout lady in the doorway. He was a fresh, pleasant, handsome young man, with a bright friendly manner; he recommended Ransom to take a seat in the other room, without delay; if he had never heard Miss Tarrant he would have one of the greatest pleasures of his life.

'Oh, Mr. Ransom only comes to ventilate his prejudices,' Miss Chancellor said, as she turned her back to her kinsman. He shrank from pushing into the front of the company, which was now rapidly filling the music-room, and contented himself with lingering in the doorway, where

several gentlemen were stationed. The seats were all occupied; all, that is, save one, towards which he saw Miss Chancellor and her companion direct themselves, squeezing and edging past the people who were standing up against the walls. This was quite in front, close to the little platform; every one noticed Olive as she went, and Ransom heard a gentleman near him say to another—'I guess she's one of the same kind.' He looked for Verena, but she was apparently keeping out of sight. Suddenly he felt himself smartly tapped on the back, and, turning round, perceived Mrs. Luna, who had been prodding him with her fan.

XXVII.

'You won't speak to me in my own house—that I have almost grown used to; but if you are going to pass me over in public I think you might give me warning first.' This was only her archness, and he knew what to make of that now; she was dressed in yellow and looked very plump and gay. He wondered at the unerring instinct by which she had discovered his exposed quarter. The outer room was completely empty; she had come in at the further door and found the field free for her operations. He offered to find her a place where she could see and hear Miss Tarrant, to get her a chair to stand on, even, if she wished to look over the heads of the gentlemen in the doorway; a proposal which she greeted with the inquiry—'Do you suppose I came here for the sake of that chatterbox? haven't I told you what I think of her?'

'Well, you certainly did not come here for my sake,' said Ransom, anticipating this insinuation; 'for you couldn't possibly have known I was coming.'

'I guessed it—a presentiment told me!' Mrs. Luna declared; and she looked up at him with searching, accusing eyes. 'I know what you have come for,' she cried in a moment. 'You never mentioned to me that you knew Mrs. Burrage!'

'I don't—I never had heard of her till she asked me.'

'Then why in the world *did* she ask you?'

Ransom had spoken a trifle rashly; it came over him, quickly, that there were reasons why he had better not have said that. But almost as quickly he covered up his mistake. 'I suppose your sister was so good as to ask for a card for me.'

'My sister? My grandmother! I know how Olive loves you. Mr. Ransom, you are very deep.' She had drawn him well into the room, out of earshot of the group in the doorway, and he felt that if she should be able to compass her wish she would organise a little entertainment for herself, in the outer drawing-room, in opposition to Miss Tarrant's address. 'Please come and sit down here a moment; we shall be quite undisturbed. I have something very particular to say to you.' She led the way to the little sofa in the corner, where he had been talking with Olive a few minutes before, and he accompanied her, with extreme reluctance, grudging the moments that he should be obliged to give to her. He had quite forgotten that he

once had a vision of spending his life in her society, and he looked at his watch as he made the observation:

'I haven't the least idea of losing any of the sport in there, you know.'

He felt, the next instant, that he oughtn't to have said that either; but he was irritated, disconcerted, and he couldn't help it. It was in the nature of a gallant Mississippian to do everything a lady asked him, and he had never, remarkable as it may appear, been in the position of finding such a request so incompatible with his own desires as now. It was a new predicament, for Mrs. Luna evidently meant to keep him if she could. She looked round the room, more and more pleased at their having it to themselves, and for the moment said nothing more about the singularity of his being there. On the contrary, she became freshly jocular, remarked that now they had got hold of him they wouldn't easily let him go, they would make him entertain them, induce him to give a lecture—on the 'Lights and Shadows of Southern Life,' or the 'Social Peculiarities of Mississippi'—before the Wednesday Club.

'And what in the world is the Wednesday Club? I suppose it's what those ladies were talking about,' Ransom said.

'I don't know your ladies, but the Wednesday Club is this thing. I don't mean you and me here together, but all those deluded beings in the other room. It is New

York trying to be like Boston. It is the culture, the good form, of the metropolis. You might not think it, but it is. It's the 'quiet set'; they *are* quiet enough; you might hear a pin drop, in there. Is some one going to offer up a prayer? How happy Olive must be, to be taken so seriously! They form an association for meeting at each other's houses, every week, and having some performance, or some paper read, or some subject explained. The more dreary it is and the more fearful the subject, the more they think it is what it ought to be. They have an idea this is the way to make New York society intellectual. There's a sumptuary law—isn't that what you call it?—about suppers, and they restrict themselves to a kind of Spartan broth. When it's made by their French cooks it isn't bad. Mrs. Burrage is one of the principal members — one of the founders, I believe; and when her turn has come round, formerly—it comes only once in the winter for each—I am told she has usually had very good music. But that is thought rather a base evasion, a begging of the question; the vulgar set can easily keep up with them on music. So Mrs. Burrage conceived the extraordinary idea'—and it was wonderful to hear how Mrs. Luna pronounced that adjective —'of sending on to Boston for that girl. It was her son, of course, who put it into her head; he has been at Cambridge for some years—that's where Verena lived, you know

—and he was as thick with her as you please out there. Now that he is no longer there it suits him very well to have her here. She is coming on a visit to his mother when Olive goes. I asked them to stay with me, but Olive declined, majestically; she said they wished to be in some place where they would be free to receive 'sympathising friends.' So they are staying at some extraordinary kind of New Jerusalem boarding-house, in Tenth Street; Olive thinks it's her duty to go to such places. I was greatly surprised that she should let Verena be drawn into such a worldly crowd as this; but she told me they had made up their minds not to let *any* occasion slip, that they could sow the seed of truth in drawing-rooms as well as in workshops, and that if a single person was brought round to their ideas they should have been justified in coming on. That's what they are doing in there—sowing the seed; but you shall not be the one that's brought round, I shall take care of that. Have you seen my delightful sister yet? The way she *does* arrange herself when she wants to protest against frills! She looks as if she thought it pretty barren ground round here, now she has come to see it. I don't think she thinks you can be saved in a French dress, anyhow. I must say I call it a *very* base evasion of Mrs. Burrage's, producing Verena Tarrant; it's worse than the meretricious music. Why didn't she honestly send for a *ballerina* from Niblo's

—if she wanted a young woman capering about on a platform? They don't care a fig about poor Olive's ideas; it's only because Verena has strange hair, and shiny eyes, and gets herself up like a prestidigitator's assistant. I have never understood how Olive can reconcile herself to Verena's really low style of dress. I suppose it's only because her clothes are so fearfully made. You look as if you didn't believe me—but I assure you that the cut is revolutionary; and that's a salve to Olive's conscience.'

Ransom was surprised to hear that he looked as if he didn't believe her, for he had found himself, after his first uneasiness, listening with considerable interest to her account of the circumstances under which Miss Tarrant was visiting New York. After a moment, as the result of some private reflection, he propounded this question: 'Is the son of the lady of the house a handsome young man, very polite, in a white vest?'

'I don't know the colour of his vest—but he has a kind of fawning manner. Verena judges from that that he is in love with her.'

'Perhaps he is,' said Ransom. 'You say it was his idea to get her to come on.'

'Oh, he likes to flirt; that is highly probable.'

'Perhaps she has brought him round.'

'Not to where she wants, I think. The property is very large; he will have it all one of these days.'

'Do you mean she wishes to impose on him the yoke of matrimony?' Ransom asked, with Southern languor.

'I believe she thinks matrimony an exploded superstition; but there is here and there a case in which it is still the best thing; when the gentleman's name happens to be Burrage and the young lady's Tarrant. I don't admire 'Burrage' so much myself. But I think she would have captured this present scion if it hadn't been for Olive. Olive stands between them—she wants to keep her in the single sisterhood; to keep her, above all, for herself. Of course she won't listen to her marrying, and she has put a spoke in the wheel. She has brought her to New York; that may seem against what I say; but the girl pulls hard, she has to humour her, to give her her head sometimes, to throw something overboard, in short, to save the rest. You may say, as regards Mr. Burrage, that it's a queer taste in a gentleman; but there is no arguing about that. It's queer taste in a lady, too; for she is a lady, poor Olive. You can see that to-night. She is dressed like a book-agent, but she is more distinguished than any one here. Verena, beside her, looks like a walking advertisement.'

When Mrs. Luna paused, Basil Ransom became aware that, in the other room, Verena's address had begun; the

sound of her clear, bright, ringing voice, an admirable voice for public uses, came to them from the distance. His eagerness to stand where he could hear her better, and see her into the bargain, made him start in his place, and this movement produced an outgush of mocking laughter on the part of his companion. But she didn't say—'Go, go, deluded man, I take pity on you!' she only remarked, with light impertinence, that he surely wouldn't be so wanting in gallantry as to leave a lady absolutely alone in a public place—it was so Mrs. Luna was pleased to qualify Mrs. Burrage's drawing-room—in the face of her entreaty that he would remain with her. She had the better of poor Ransom, thanks to the superstitions of Mississippi. It was in his simple code a gross rudeness to withdraw from conversation with a lady at a party before another gentleman should have come to take one's place; it was to inflict on the lady a kind of outrage. The other gentlemen, at Mrs. Burrage's, were all too well occupied; there was not the smallest chance of one of them coming to his rescue. He couldn't leave Mrs. Luna, and yet he couldn't stay with her and lose the only thing he had come so much out of his way for. 'Let me at least find you a place over there, in the doorway. You can stand upon a chair—you can lean on me.'

'Thank you very much; I would much rather lean on

this sofa. And I am much too tired to stand on chairs. Besides, I wouldn't for the world that either Verena or Olive should see me craning over the heads of the crowd—as if I attached the smallest importance to their perorations!'

'It isn't time for the peroration yet,' Ransom said, with savage dryness; and he sat forward, with his elbow on his knees, his eyes on the ground, a flush in his sallow cheek.

'It's never time to say such things as those,' Mrs. Luna remarked, arranging her laces.

'How do you know what she is saying?'

'I can tell by the way her voice goes up and down. It sounds so silly.'

Ransom sat there five minutes longer—minutes which, he felt, the recording angel ought to write down to his credit—and asked himself how Mrs. Luna could be such a goose as not to see that she was making him hate her. But she was goose enough for anything. He tried to appear indifferent, and it occurred to him to doubt whether the Mississippi system could be right, after all. It certainly hadn't foreseen such a case as this. 'It's as plain as day that Mr. Burrage intends to marry her—if he can,' he said in a minute; that remark being better calculated than any other he could think of to dissimulate his real state of mind.

It drew no rejoinder from his companion, and after an instant he turned his head a little and glanced at her. The result of something that silently passed between them was to make her say, abruptly: 'Mr. Ransom, my sister never sent you an invitation to this place. Didn't it come from Verena Tarrant?'

'I haven't the least idea.'

'As you hadn't the least acquaintance with Mrs. Burrage, who else could it have come from?'

'If it came from Miss Tarrant, I ought at least to recognise her courtesy by listening to her.'

'If you rise from this sofa I will tell Olive what I suspect. She will be perfectly capable of carrying Verena off to China—or anywhere out of your reach.'

'And pray what is it you suspect?'

'That you two have been in correspondence.'

'Tell her whatever you like, Mrs. Luna,' said the young man, with the grimness of resignation.

'You are quite unable to deny it, I see.'

'I never contradict a lady.'

'We shall see if I can't make you tell a fib. Haven't you been seeing Miss Tarrant, too?'

'Where should I have seen her? I can't see all the way to Boston, as you said the other day.'

'Haven't you been there—on secret visits?'

Ransom started just perceptibly; but to conceal it, the next instant, he stood up.

'They wouldn't be secret if I were to tell you.'

Looking down at her he saw that her words were a happy hit, not the result of definite knowledge. But she appeared to him vain, egotistical, grasping, odious.

'Well, I shall give the alarm,' she went on; 'that is, I will if you leave me. Is that the way a Southern gentleman treats a lady? Do as I wish, and I will let you off!'

'You won't let me off from staying with you.'

'Is it such a *corvée?* I never heard of such rudeness!' Mrs. Luna cried. 'All the same, I am determined to keep you if I can!'

Ransom felt that she must be in the wrong, and yet superficially she seemed (and it was quite intolerable), to have right on her side. All this while Verena's golden voice, with her words indistinct, solicited, tantalised his ear. The question had evidently got on Mrs. Luna's nerves; she had reached that point of feminine embroilment when a woman is perverse for the sake of perversity, and even with a clear vision of bad consequences.

'You have lost your head,' he relieved himself by saying, as he looked down at her.

'I wish you would go and get me some tea.'

'You say that only to embarrass me.' He had hardly

spoken when a great sound of applause, the clapping of many hands, and the cry from fifty throats of 'Brava, brava!' floated in and died away. All Ransom's pulses throbbed, he flung his scruples to the winds, and after remarking to Mrs. Luna—still with all due ceremony—that he feared he must resign himself to forfeiting her good opinion, turned his back upon her and strode away to the open door of the music-room. 'Well, I have never been so insulted!' he heard her exclaim, with exceeding sharpness, as he left her; and, glancing back at her, as he took up his position, he saw her still seated on her sofa—alone in the lamp-lit desert—with her eyes making, across the empty space, little vindictive points. Well, she could come where he was, if she wanted him so much; he would support her on an ottoman, and make it easy for her to see. But Mrs. Luna was uncompromising; he became aware, after a minute, that she had withdrawn, majestically, from the place, and he did not see her again that evening.

XXVIII.

He could command the music-room very well from where he stood, behind a thick outer fringe of intently listening men. Verena Tarrant was erect on her little platform, dressed in white, with flowers in her bosom. The red cloth beneath her feet looked rich in the light of lamps placed on high pedestals on either side of the stage; it gave her figure a setting of colour which made it more pure and salient. She moved freely in her exposed isolation, yet with great sobriety of gesture; there was no table in front of her, and she had no notes in her hand, but stood there like an actress before the footlights, or a singer spinning vocal sounds to a silver thread. There was such a risk that a slim provincial girl, pretending to fascinate a couple of hundred *blasé* New Yorkers by simply giving them her ideas, would fail of her effect, that at the end of a few moments Basil Ransom became aware that he was watching her in very much the same excited way as if she had been performing, high above his head, on the trapeze. Yet, as

one listened, it was impossible not to perceive that she was in perfect possession of her faculties, her subject, her audience; and he remembered the other time at Miss Birdseye's well enough to be able to measure the ground she had travelled since then. This exhibition was much more complete, her manner much more assured; she seemed to speak and survey the whole place from a much greater height. Her voice, too, had developed; he had forgotten how beautiful it could be when she raised it to its full capacity. Such a tone as that, so pure and rich, and yet so young, so natural, constituted in itself a talent; he didn't wonder that they had made a fuss about her at the Female Convention, if she filled their hideous hall with such a music. He had read, of old, of the *improvisatrice* of Italy, and this was a chastened, modern, American version of the type, a New England Corinna, with a mission instead of a lyre. The most graceful part of her was her earnestness, the way her delightful eyes, wandering over the 'fashionable audience' (before which she was so perfectly unabashed), as if she wished to resolve it into a single sentient personality, seemed to say that the only thing in life she cared for was to put the truth into a form that would render conviction irresistible. She was as simple as she was charming, and there was not a glance or motion that did not seem part of the pure, still-burning passion

that animated her. She had indeed—it was manifest—reduced the company to unanimity; their attention was anything but languid; they smiled back at her when she smiled; they were noiseless, motionless when she was solemn; and it was evident that the entertainment which Mrs. Burrage had had the happy thought of offering to her friends would be memorable in the annals of the Wednesday Club. It was agreeable to Basil Ransom to think that Verena noticed him in his corner; her eyes played over her listeners so freely that you couldn't say they rested in one place more than another; nevertheless, a single rapid ray, which, however, didn't in the least strike him as a deviation from her ridiculous, fantastic, delightful argument, let him know that he had been missed and now was particularly spoken to. This glance was a sufficient assurance that his invitation had come to him by the girl's request. He took for granted the matter of her speech was ridiculous; how could it help being, and what did it signify if it was? She was none the less charming for that, and the moonshine she had been plied with was none the less moonshine for her being charming. After he had stood there a quarter of an hour he became conscious that he should not be able to repeat a word she had said; he had not definitely heeded it, and yet he had not lost a vibration of her voice. He had discovered Olive Chancellor by this time; she was in

the front row of chairs, at the end, on the left; her back was turned to him, but he could see half her sharp profile, bent down a little and absolutely motionless. Even across the wide interval her attitude expressed to him a kind of rapturous stillness, the concentration of triumph. There were several irrepressible effusions of applause, instantly self-checked, but Olive never looked up, at the loudest, and such a calmness as that could only be the result of passionate volition. Success was in the air, and she was tasting it; she tasted it, as she did everything, in a way of her own. Success for Verena was success for her, and Ransom was sure that the only thing wanting to her triumph was that he should have been placed in the line of her vision, so that she might enjoy his embarrassment and confusion, might say to him, in one of her dumb, cold flashes —'*Now* do you think our movement is not a force—*now* do you think that women are meant to be slaves?' Honestly, he was not conscious of any confusion; it subverted none of his heresies to perceive that Verena Tarrant had even more power to fix his attention than he had hitherto supposed. It was fixed in a way it had not been yet, however, by his at last understanding her speech, feeling it reach his inner sense through the impediment of mere dazzled vision. Certain phrases took on a meaning for him —an appeal she was making to those who still resisted the

beneficent influence of the truth. They appeared to be mocking, cynical men, mainly; many of whom were such triflers and idlers, so heartless and brainless that it didn't matter much what they thought on any subject; if the old tyranny needed to be propped up by *them* it showed it was in a pretty bad way. But there were others whose prejudice was stronger and more cultivated, pretended to rest upon study and argument. To those she wished particularly to address herself; she wanted to waylay them, to say, 'Look here, you're all wrong; you'll be so much happier when I have convinced you. Just give me five minutes,' she should like to say; 'just sit down here and let me ask a simple question. Do you think any state of society can come to good that is based upon an organised wrong?' That was the simple question that Verena desired to propound, and Basil smiled across the room at her with an amused tenderness as he gathered that she conceived it to be a poser. He didn't think it would frighten him much if she were to ask him that, and he would sit down with her for as many minutes as she liked.

He, of course, was one of the systematic scoffers, one of those to whom she said—'Do you know how you strike me? You strike me as men who are starving to death while they have a cupboard at home, all full of bread and meat and wine; or as blind, demented beings who let

themselves be cast into a debtor's prison, while in their pocket they have the key of vaults and treasure-chests heaped up with gold and silver. The meat and wine, the gold and silver,' Verena went on, 'are simply the suppressed and wasted force, the precious sovereign remedy, of which society insanely deprives itself—the genius, the intelligence, the inspiration of women. It is dying, inch by inch, in the midst of old superstitions which it invokes in vain, and yet it has the elixir of life in its hands. Let it drink but a draught, and it will bloom once more; it will be refreshed, radiant; it will find its youth again. The heart, the heart is cold, and nothing but the touch of woman can warm it, make it act. We *are* the Heart of humanity, and let us have the courage to insist on it! The public life of the world will move in the same barren, mechanical, vicious circle—the circle of egotism, cruelty, ferocity, jealousy, greed, of blind striving to do things only for *some*, at the cost of others, instead of trying to do everything for all. All, all? Who dares to say "all" when we are not there? We are an equal, a splendid, an inestimable part. Try us and you'll see—you will wonder how, without us, society has ever dragged itself even this distance—so wretchedly small compared with what it might have been—on its painful earthly pilgrimage. That is what I should like above all to pour into the ears of those who still hold out, who stiffen their necks and repeat hard,

empty formulas, which are as dry as a broken gourd that has been flung away in the desert. I would take them by their selfishness, their indolence, their interest. I am not here to recriminate, nor to deepen the gulf that already yawns between the sexes, and I don't accept the doctrine that they are natural enemies, since my plea is for a union far more intimate—provided it be equal—than any that the sages and philosophers of former times have ever dreamed of. Therefore I shall not touch upon the subject of men's being most easily influenced by considerations of what is most agreeable and profitable for *them;* I shall simply assume that they *are* so influenced, and I shall say to them that our cause would long ago have been gained if their vision were not so dim, so veiled, even in matters in which their own interests are concerned. If they had the same quick sight as women, if they had the intelligence of the heart, the world would be very different now; and I assure you that half the bitterness of our lot is to see so clearly and not to be able to do! Good gentlemen all, if I could make you believe how much brighter and fairer and sweeter the garden of life would be for you, if you would only let us help you to keep it in order! You would like so much better to walk there, and you would find grass and trees and flowers that would make you think you were in Eden. That is what I should like to press home to each of you,

personally, individually—to give him the vision of the world as it hangs perpetually before me, redeemed, transfigured, by a new moral tone. There would be generosity, tenderness, sympathy, where there is now only brute force and sordid rivalry. But you really do strike me as stupid even about your own welfare! Some of you say that we have already all the influence we can possibly require, and talk as if we ought to be grateful that we are allowed even to breathe. Pray, who shall judge what we require if not we ourselves? We require simply freedom; we require the lid to be taken off the box in which we have been kept for centuries. You say it's a very comfortable, cozy, convenient box, with nice glass sides, so that we can see out, and that all that's wanted is to give another quiet turn to the key. That is very easily answered. Good gentlemen, you have never been in the box, and you haven't the least idea how it feels!'

The historian who has gathered these documents together does not deem it necessary to give a larger specimen of Verena's eloquence, especially as Basil Ransom, through whose ears we are listening to it, arrived, at this point, at a definite conclusion. He had taken her measure as a public speaker, judged her importance in the field of discussion, the cause of reform. Her speech, in itself, had about the value of a pretty essay, committed to

memory and delivered by a bright girl at an 'academy;' it was vague, thin, rambling, a tissue of generalities that glittered agreeably enough in Mrs. Burrage's veiled lamplight. From any serious point of view it was neither worth answering nor worth considering, and Basil Ransom made his reflections on the crazy character of the age in which such a performance as that was treated as an intellectual effort, a contribution to a question. He asked himself what either he or any one else would think of it if Miss Chancellor—or even Mrs. Luna—had been on the platform instead of the actual declaimer. . Nevertheless, its importance was high, and consisted precisely, in part, of the fact that the voice was not the voice of Olive or of Adeline. Its importance was that Verena was unspeakably attractive, and this was all the greater for him in the light of the fact, which quietly dawned upon him as he stood there, that he was falling in love with her. It had tapped at his heart for recognition, and before he could hesitate or challenge, the door had sprung open and the mansion was illuminated. He gave no outward sign; he stood gazing as at a picture; but the room wavered before his eyes, even Verena's figure danced a little. This did not make the sequel of her discourse more clear to him; her meaning faded again into the agreeable vague, and he simply felt her presence, tasted her voice. Yet the act of reflection was not suspended;

he found himself rejoicing that she was so weak in argument, so inevitably verbose. The idea that she was brilliant, that she counted as a factor only because the public mind was in a muddle, was not an humiliation but a delight to him; it was a proof that her apostleship was all nonsense, the most passing of fashions, the veriest of delusions, and that she was meant for something divinely different—for privacy, for him, for love. He took no measure of the duration of her talk; he only knew, when it was over and succeeded by a clapping of hands, an immense buzz of voices and shuffling of chairs, that it had been capitally bad, and that her personal success, wrapping it about with a glamour like the silver mist that surrounds a fountain, was such as to prevent its badness from being a cause of mortification to her lover. The company—such of it as did not immediately close together around Verena—filed away into the other rooms, bore him in its current into the neighbourhood of a table spread for supper, where he looked for signs of the sumptuary law mentioned to him by Mrs. Luna. It appeared to be embodied mainly in the glitter of crystal and silver, and the fresh tints of mysterious viands and jellies, which looked desirable in the soft circle projected by lace-fringed lamps. He heard the popping of corks, he felt a pressure of elbows, a thickening of the crowd, perceived that he was glowered at, squeezed against the table

by contending gentlemen who observed that he usurped space, was neither feeding himself nor helping others to feed. He had lost sight of Verena; she had been borne away in clouds of compliment; but he found himself thinking—almost paternally—that she must be hungry after so much chatter, and he hoped some one was getting her something to eat. After a moment, just as he was edging away, for his own opportunity to sup much better than usual was not what was uppermost in his mind, this little vision was suddenly embodied—embodied by the appearance of Miss Tarrant, who faced him, in the press, attached to the arm of a young man now recognisable to him as the son of the house—the smiling, fragrant youth who an hour before had interrupted his colloquy with Olive. He was leading her to the table, while people made way for them, covering Verena with gratulations of word and look. Ransom could see that, according to a phrase which came back to him just then, oddly, out of some novel or poem he had read of old, she was the cynosure of every eye. She looked beautiful, and they were a beautiful couple. As soon as she saw him, she put out her left hand to him—the other was in Mr. Burrage's arm—and said: 'Well, don't you think it's all true?'

'No, not a word of it!' Ransom answered, with a kind of joyous sincerity. 'But it doesn't make any difference.'

'Oh, it makes a great deal of difference to me!' Verena cried.

'I mean to me. I don't care in the least whether I agree with you,' Ransom said, looking askance at young Mr. Burrage, who had detached himself and was getting something for Verena to eat.

'Ah, well, if you are so indifferent!'

'It's not because I'm indifferent!' His eyes came back to her own, the expression of which had changed before they quitted them. She began to complain to her companion, who brought her something very dainty on a plate, that Mr. Ransom was 'standing out,' that he was about the hardest subject she had encountered yet. Henry Burrage smiled upon Ransom in a way that was meant to show he remembered having already spoken to him, while the Mississippian said to himself that there was nothing on the face of it to make it strange there should be between these fair, successful young persons some such question of love or marriage as Mrs. Luna had tattled about. Mr. Burrage was successful, he could see that in the turn of an eye; not perhaps as having a commanding intellect or a very strong character, but as being rich, polite, handsome, happy, amiable, and as wearing a splendid camellia in his buttonhole. And that *he*, at any rate, thought Verena had succeeded was proved by the casual, civil tone, and the

contented distraction of eye, with which he exclaimed, 'You don't mean to say you were not moved by that! It's my opinion that Miss Tarrant will carry everything before her.' He was so pleased himself, and so safe in his conviction, that it didn't matter to him what any one else thought; which was, after all, just Basil Ransom's own state of mind.

'Oh! I didn't say I wasn't moved,' the Mississippian remarked.

'Moved the wrong way!' said Verena. 'Never mind; you'll be left behind.'

'If I am, you will come back to console me.'

'*Back?* I shall never come back!' the girl replied, gaily.

'You'll be the very first!' Ransom went on, feeling himself now, and as if by a sudden clearing up of his spiritual atmosphere, no longer in the vein for making the concessions of chivalry, and yet conscious that his words were an expression of homage.

'Oh, I call that presumptuous!' Mr. Burrage exclaimed, turning away to get a glass of water for Verena, who had refused to accept champagne, mentioning that she had never drunk any in her life and that she associated a kind of iniquity with it. Olive had no wine in her house (not that Verena gave this explanation), but her father's old madeira and a little claret; of the former of which liquors

Basil Ransom had highly approved the day he dined with her.

'Does he believe in all those lunacies?' he inquired, knowing perfectly what to think about the charge of presumption brought by Mr Burrage.

'Why, he's crazy about our movement,' Verena responded. 'He's one of my most gratifying converts.'

'And don't you despise him for it?'

'Despise him? Why, you seem to think I swing round pretty often!'

'Well, I have an idea that I shall see you swing round yet,' Ransom remarked, in a tone in which it would have appeared to Henry Burrage, had he heard these words, that presumption was pushed to fatuity.

On Verena, however, they produced no impression that prevented her from saying simply, without the least rancour, 'Well, if you expect to draw me back five hundred years, I hope you won't tell Miss Birdseye.' And as Ransom did not seize immediately the reason of her allusion, she went on, 'You know she is convinced it will be just the other way. I went to see her after you had been at Cambridge —almost immediately.'

'Darling old lady—I hope she's well,' the young man said.

'Well, she's tremendously interested.'

'She's always interested in something, isn't she?'

'Well, this time it's in our relations, yours and mine,' Verena replied, in a tone in which only Verena could say a thing like that. 'You ought to see how she throws herself into them. She is sure it will all work round for your good.'

'All what, Miss Tarrant?' Ransom asked.

'Well, what I told her. She is sure you are going to become one of our leaders, that you are very gifted for treating great questions and acting on masses of people, that you will become quite enthusiastic about our uprising, and that when you go up to the top as one of our champions it will all have been through me.'

Ransom stood there, smiling at her; the dusky glow in his eyes expressed a softness representing no prevision of such laurels, but which testified none the less to Verena's influence. 'And what you want is that I shouldn't undeceive her?'

'Well, I don't want you to be hypocritical—if you shouldn't take our side; but I do think that it would be sweet if the dear old thing could just cling to her illusion. She won't live so very long, probably; she told me the other day she was ready for her final rest; so it wouldn't interfere much with your freedom. She feels quite romantic about it—your being a Southerner and all, and not naturally in

sympathy with Boston ideas, and your meeting her that way in the street and making yourself known to her. She won't believe but what I shall move you.'

'Don't fear, Miss Tarrant, she shall be satisfied,' Ransom said, with a laugh which he could see she but partially understood. He was prevented from making his meaning more clear by the return of Mr. Burrage, bringing not only Verena's glass of water but a smooth-faced, rosy, smiling old gentleman, who had a velvet waistcoat, and thin white hair, brushed effectively, and whom he introduced to Verena under a name which Ransom recognised as that of a rich and venerable citizen, conspicuous for his public spirit and his large almsgiving. Ransom had lived long enough in New York to know that a request from this ancient worthy to be made known to Miss Tarrant would mark her for the approval of the respectable, stamp her as a success of no vulgar sort; and as he turned away, a faint, inaudible sigh passed his lips, dictated by the sense that he himself belonged to a terribly small and obscure minority. He turned away because, as we know, he had been taught that a gentleman talking to a lady must always do that when a new gentleman is presented; though he observed, looking back, after a minute, that young Mr. Burrage evidently had no intention of abdicating in favour of the eminent philanthropist. He thought he had better go

home; he didn't know what might happen at such a party as that, nor when the proceedings might be supposed to terminate; but after considering it a minute he dismissed the idea that there was a chance of Verena's speaking again. If he was a little vague about this, however, there was no doubt in his mind as to the obligation he was under to take leave first of Mrs. Burrage. He wished he knew where Verena was staying; he wanted to see her alone, not in a supper-room crowded with millionaires. As he looked about for the hostess it occurred to him that she would know, and that if he were able to quench a certain shyness sufficiently to ask her, she would tell him. Having satisfied himself presently that she was not in the supper-room, he made his way back to the parlours, where the company now was much diminished. He looked again into the music-room, tenanted only by half-a-dozen couples, who were cultivating privacy among the empty chairs, and here he perceived Mrs. Burrage sitting in conversation with Olive Chancellor (the latter, apparently, had not moved from her place), before the deserted scene of Verena's triumph. His search had been so little for Olive that at the sight of her he faltered a moment; then he pulled himself together, advancing with a consciousness of the Mississippi manner. He felt Olive's eyes receiving him; she looked at him as if it was just the hope that she

shouldn't meet him again that had made her remain where she was. Mrs. Burrage got up, as he bade her good-night, and Olive followed her example.

'So glad you were able to come. Wonderful creature, isn't she? She can do anything she wants.'

These words from the elder lady Ransom received at first with a reserve which, as he trusted, suggested extreme respect; and it was a fact that his silence had a kind of Southern solemnity in it. Then he said, in a tone equally expressive of great deliberation:

'Yes, madam, I think I never was present at an exhibition, an entertainment of any kind, which held me more completely under the charm.'

'Delighted you liked it. I didn't know what in the world to have, and this has proved an inspiration—for me as well as for Miss Tarrant. Miss Chancellor has been telling me how they have worked together; it's really quite beautiful. Miss Chancellor is Miss Tarrant's great friend and colleague. Miss Tarrant assures me that she couldn't do anything without her.' After which explanation, turning to Olive, Mrs. Burrage murmured: 'Let me introduce Mr. —— introduce Mr. ——'

But she had forgotten poor Ransom's name, forgotten who had asked her for a card for him; and, perceiving it, he came to her rescue with the observation that he was a

kind of cousin of Miss Olive's, if she didn't repudiate him, and that he knew what a tremendous partnership existed between the two young ladies. 'When I applauded I was applauding the firm—that is, you too,' he said, smiling, to his kinswoman.

'Your applause? I confess I don't understand it,' Olive replied, with much promptitude.

'Well, to tell the truth, I didn't myself!'

'Oh yes, of course I know; that's why—that's why ——' And this further speech of Mrs. Burrage's, in reference to the relationship between the young man and her companion, faded also into vagueness. She had been on the point of saying it was the reason why he was in her house; but she had bethought herself in time that this ought to pass as a matter of course. Basil Ransom could see she was a woman who could carry off an awkwardness like that, and he considered her with a sense of her importance. She had a brisk, familiar, slightly impatient way, and if she had not spoken so fast, and had more of the softness of the Southern matron, she would have reminded him of a certain type of woman he had seen of old, before the changes in his own part of the world—the clever, capable, hospitable proprietress, widowed or unmarried, of a big plantation carried on by herself. 'If you are her cousin, do take Miss Chancellor to have some supper—

instead of going away,' she went on, with her infelicitous readiness.

At this Olive instantly seated herself again.

'I am much obliged to you; I never touch supper. I shall not leave this room—I like it.'

'Then let me send you something—or let Mr. ——, your cousin, remain with you.'

Olive looked at Mrs. Burrage with a strange beseechingness, 'I am very tired, I must rest. These occasions leave me exhausted.'

'Ah yes, I can imagine that. Well, then, you shall be quite quiet—I shall come back to you.' And with a smile of farewell for Basil Ransom, Mrs. Burrage moved away.

Basil lingered a moment, though he saw that Olive wished to get rid of him. 'I won't disturb you further than to ask you a single question,' he said. 'Where are you staying? I want to come and see Miss Tarrant. I don't say I want to come and see you, because I have an idea that it would give you no pleasure.' It had occurred to him that he might obtain their address from Mrs. Luna —he only knew vaguely it was Tenth Street; much as he had displeased her she couldn't refuse him that; but suddenly the greater simplicity and frankness of applying directly to Olive, even at the risk of appearing to brave her, recommended itself. He couldn't, of course, call upon

Verena without her knowing it, and she might as well make her protest (since he proposed to pay no heed to it), sooner as later. He had seen nothing, personally, of their life together, but it had come over him that what Miss Chancellor most disliked in him (had she not, on the very threshold of their acquaintance, had a sort of mystical foreboding of it?) was the possibility that he would interfere. It was quite on the cards that he might; yet it was decent, all the same, to ask her rather than any one else. It was better that his interference should be accompanied with all the forms of chivalry.

Olive took no notice of his remark as to how she herself might be affected by his visit; but she asked in a moment why he should think it necessary to call on Miss Tarrant. 'You know you are not in sympathy,' she added, in a tone which contained a really touching element of entreaty that he would not even pretend to prove he was.

I know not whether Basil was touched, but he said, with every appearance of a conciliatory purpose—'I wish to thank her for all the interesting information she has given me this evening.'

'If you think it generous to come and scoff at her, of course she has no defence; you will be glad to know that.'

'Dear Miss Chancellor, if you are not a defence—a battery of many guns!' Ransom exclaimed.

'Well, she at least is not mine!' Olive returned, springing to her feet. She looked round her as if she were really pressed too hard, panting like a hunted creature.

'Your defence is your certain immunity from attack. Perhaps if you won't tell me where you are staying, you will kindly ask Miss Tarrant herself to do so. Would she send me a word on a card?'

'We are in West Tenth Street,' Olive said; and she gave the number. 'Of course you are free to come.'

'Of course I am! Why shouldn't I be? But I am greatly obliged to you for the information. I will ask her to come out, so that you won't see us.' And he turned away, with the sense that it was really insufferable, her attempt always to give him the air of being in the wrong. If that was the kind of spirit in which women were going to act when they had more power!

XXIX.

MRS. LUNA was early in the field the next day, and her sister wondered to what she owed the honour of a visit from her at eleven o'clock in the morning. She very soon saw, when Adeline asked her whether it had been she who procured for Basil Ransom an invitation to Mrs. Burrage's.

'Me—why in the world should it have been me?' Olive asked, feeling something of a pang at the implication that it had not been Adeline, as she supposed.

'I didn't know—but you took him up so.'

'Why, Adeline Luna, when did I ever——?' Miss Chancellor exclaimed, staring and intensely grave.

'You don't mean to say you have forgotten how you brought him on to see you, a year and a half ago!'

'I didn't bring him on—I said if he happened to be there.'

'Yes, I remember how it was: he did happen, and then you happened to hate him, and tried to get out of it.'

Miss Chancellor saw, I say, why Adeline had come to her at the hour she knew she was always writing letters, after having given her all the attention that was necessary the day before; she had come simply to make herself disagreeable, as Olive knew, of old, the spirit sometimes moved her irresistibly to do. It seemed to her that Adeline had been disagreeable enough in not having beguiled Basil Ransom into a marriage, according to that memorable calculation of probabilities in which she indulged (with a licence that she scarcely liked definitely to recall), when the pair made acquaintance under her eyes in Charles Street, and Mrs. Luna seemed to take to him as much as she herself did little. She would gladly have accepted him as a brother-in-law, for the harm such a relation could do one was limited and definite; whereas in his general capacity of being at large in her life the ability of the young Mississippian to injure her seemed somehow immense. 'I wrote to him—that time—for a perfectly definite reason,' she said. 'I thought mother would have liked us to know him. But it was a mistake.'

'How do you know it was a mistake? Mother would have liked him, I dare say.'

'I mean my acting as I did; it was a theory of duty which I allowed to press me too much. I always do. Duty should be obvious; one shouldn't hunt round for it.'

'Was it very obvious when it brought you on here?' asked Mrs. Luna, who was distinctly out of humour.

Olive looked for a moment at the toe of her shoe. 'I had an idea that you would have married him by this time,' she presently remarked.

'Marry him yourself, my dear! What put such an idea into your head?'

'You wrote to me at first so much about him. You told me he was tremendously attentive, and that you liked him.'

'His state of mind is one thing and mine is another. How can I marry every man that hangs about me—that dogs my footsteps? I might as well become a Mormon at once!' Mrs. Luna delivered herself of this argument with a certain charitable air, as if her sister could not be expected to understand such a situation by her own light.

Olive waived the discussion, and simply said: 'I took for granted *you* had got him the invitation.'

'I, my dear? That would be quite at variance with my attitude of discouragement.'

'Then she simply sent it herself.'

'Whom do you mean by "she"?'

'Mrs. Burrage, of course.'

'I thought that you might mean Verena,' said Mrs. Luna, casually.

'Verena—to him? Why in the world——?' And Olive gave the cold glare with which her sister was familiar.

'Why in the world not—since she knows him?'

'She had seen him twice in her life before last night, when she met him for the third time and spoke to him.'

'Did she tell you that?'

'She tells me everything.'

'Are you very sure?'

'Adeline Luna, what *do* you mean?' Miss Chancellor murmured.

'Are you very sure that last night was only the third time?' Mrs. Luna went on.

Olive threw back her head and swept her sister from her bonnet to her lowest flounce. 'You have no right to hint at such a thing as that unless you know!'

'Oh, I know—I know, at any rate, more than you do!' And then Mrs. Luna, sitting with her sister, much withdrawn, in one of the windows of the big, hot, faded parlour of the boarding-house in Tenth Street, where there was a rug before the chimney representing a Newfoundland dog saving a child from drowning, and a row of chromo-lithographs on the walls, imparted to her the impression she had received the evening before—the impression of Basil Ransom's keen curiosity about Verena Tarrant. Verena must have asked Mrs. Burrage to send him a card, and

asked it without mentioning the fact to Olive—for wouldn't Olive certainly have remembered it? It was no use her saying that Mrs. Burrage might have sent it of her own movement, because she wasn't aware of his existence, and why should she be? Basil Ransom himself had told her he didn't know Mrs. Burrage. Mrs. Luna knew whom he knew and whom he didn't, or at least the sort of people, and they were not the sort that belonged to the Wednesday Club. That was one reason why she didn't care about him for any intimate relation—that he didn't seem to have any taste for making nice friends. Olive would know what *her* taste was in this respect, though it wasn't that young woman's own any more than his. It was positive that the suggestion about the card could only have come from Verena. At any rate Olive could easily ask, or if she was afraid of her telling a fib she could ask Mrs. Burrage. It was true Mrs. Burrage might have been put on her guard by Verena, and would perhaps invent some other account of the matter; therefore Olive had better just believe what *she* believed, that Verena had secured his presence at the party and had had private reasons for doing so. It is to be feared that Ransom's remark to Mrs. Luna the night before about her having lost her head was near to the mark; for if she had not been blinded by her rancour she would have guessed the horror with which she inspired her

sister when she spoke in that off-hand way of Verena's lying and Mrs. Burrage's lying. Did people lie like that in Mrs. Luna's set? It was Olive's plan of life not to lie, and attributing a similar disposition to people she liked, it was impossible for her to believe that Verena had had the intention of deceiving her. Mrs. Luna, in a calmer hour, might also have divined that Olive would make her private comments on the strange story of Basil Ransom's having made up to Verena out of pique at Adeline's rebuff; for this was the account of the matter that she now offered to Miss Chancellor. Olive did two things: she listened intently and eagerly, judging there was distinct danger in the air (which, however, she had not wanted Mrs. Luna to tell her, having perceived it for herself the night before); and she saw that poor Adeline was fabricating fearfully, that the 'rebuff' was altogether an invention. Mr. Ransom was evidently preoccupied with Verena, but he had not needed Mrs. Luna's cruelty to make him so. So Olive maintained an attitude of great reserve; she did not take upon herself to announce that her own version was that Adeline, for reasons absolutely imperceptible to others, had tried to catch Basil Ransom, had failed in her attempt, and, furious at seeing Verena preferred to a person of her importance (Olive remembered the *spretæ injuria formæ*), now wished to do both him and the girl an ill turn. This would be

accomplished if she could induce Olive to interfere. Miss Chancellor was conscious of an abundant readiness to interfere, but it was not because she cared for Adeline's mortification. I am not sure, even, that she did not think her *fiasco* but another illustration of her sister's general uselessness, and rather despise her for it; being perfectly able at once to hold that nothing is baser than the effort to entrap a man, and to think it very ignoble to have to renounce it because you can't. Olive kept these reflections to herself, but she went so far as to say to her sister that she didn't see where the 'pique' came in. How could it hurt Adeline that he should turn his attention to Verena? What was Verena to her?

'Why, Olive Chancellor, how can you ask?' Mrs. Luna boldly responded. 'Isn't Verena everything to you, and aren't you everything to me, and wouldn't an attempt—a successful one—to take Verena away from you knock you up fearfully, and shouldn't I suffer, as you know I suffer, by sympathy?'

I have said that it was Miss Chancellor's plan of life not to lie, but such a plan was compatible with a kind of consideration for the truth which led her to shrink from producing it on poor occasions. So she didn't say, 'Dear me, Adeline, what humbug! you know you hate Verena and would be very glad if she were drowned!' She only

said, 'Well, I see; but it's very roundabout.' What she did see was that Mrs. Luna was eager to help her to stop off Basil Ransom from 'making head,' as the phrase was; and the fact that her motive was spite, and not tenderness for the Bostonians, would not make her assistance less welcome if the danger were real. She herself had a nervous dread, but she had that about everything; still, Adeline had perhaps seen something, and what in the world did she mean by her reference to Verena's having had secret meetings? When pressed on this point, Mrs. Luna could only say that she didn't pretend to give definite information, and she wasn't a spy anyway, but that the night before he had positively flaunted in her face his admiration for the girl, his enthusiasm for her way of standing up there. Of course he hated her ideas, but he was quite conceited enough to think she would give them up. Perhaps it was all directed at *her*—as if she cared! It would depend a good deal on the girl herself; certainly, if there was any likelihood of Verena's being affected, she should advise Olive to look out. She knew best what to do; it was only Adeline's duty to give her the benefit of her own impression, whether she was thanked for it or not. She only wished to put her on her guard, and it was just like Olive to receive such information so coldly; she was the most disappointing woman she knew.

Miss Chancellor's coldness was not diminished by this rebuke; for it had come over her that, after all, she had never opened herself at that rate to Adeline, had never let her see the real intensity of her desire to keep the sort of danger there was now a question of away from Verena, had given her no warrant for regarding her as her friend's keeper; so that she was taken aback by the flatness of Mrs. Luna's assumption that she was ready to enter into a conspiracy to circumvent and frustrate the girl. Olive put on all her majesty to dispel this impression, and if she could not help being aware that she made Mrs. Luna still angrier, on the whole, than at first, she felt that she would much rather disappoint her than give herself away to her—especially as she was intensely eager to profit by her warning!

XXX.

MRS. LUNA would have been still less satisfied with the manner in which Olive received her proffered assistance had she known how many confidences that reticent young woman might have made her in return. Olive's whole life now was a matter for whispered communications; she felt this herself, as she sought the privacy of her own apartment after her interview with her sister. She had for the moment time to think; Verena having gone out with Mr. Burrage, who had made an appointment the night before to call for her to drive at that early hour. They had other engagements in the afternoon—the principal of which was to meet a group of earnest people at the house of one of the great local promoters. Olive would whisk Verena off to these appointments directly after lunch; she flattered herself that she could arrange matters so that there would not be half an hour in the day during which Basil Ransom, complacently calling, would find the Bostonians in the house. She had had this well in mind when, at Mrs. Burrage's, she was

driven to give him their address; and she had had it also in mind that she would ask Verena, as a special favour, to accompany her back to Boston on the next day but one, which was the morning of the morrow. There had been considerable talk of her staying a few days with Mrs Burrage—staying on after her own departure; but Verena backed out of it spontaneously, seeing how the idea worried her friend. Olive had accepted the sacrifice, and their visit to New York was now cut down, in intention, to four days, one of which, the moment she perceived whither Basil Ransom was tending, Miss Chancellor promised herself also to suppress. She had not mentioned that to Verena yet; she hesitated a little, having a slightly bad conscience about the concessions she had already obtained from her friend. Verena made such concessions with a generosity which caused one's heart to ache for admiration, even while one asked for them; and never once had Olive known her to demand the smallest credit for any virtue she showed in this way, or to bargain for an instant about any effort she made to oblige. She had been delighted with the idea of spending a week under Mrs. Burrage's roof; she had said, too, that she believed her mother would die happy (not that there was the least prospect of Mrs. Tarrant's dying), if she could hear of her having such an experience as that; and yet, perceiving how solemn Olive looked about it, how

she blanched and brooded at the prospect, she had offered to give it up, with a smile sweeter, if possible, than any that had ever sat in her eyes. Olive knew what that meant for her, knew what a power of enjoyment she still had, in spite of the tension of their common purpose, their vital work, which had now, as they equally felt, passed into the stage of realisation, of fruition; and that is why her conscience rather pricked her for consenting to this further act of renunciation, especially as their position seemed really so secure, on the part of one who had already given herself away so sublimely.

Secure as their position might be, Olive called herself a blind idiot for having, in spite of all her first shrinkings, agreed to bring Verena to New York. Verena had jumped at the invitation, the very unexpectedness of which on Mrs. Burrage's part—it was such an odd idea to have come to a mere worldling—carried a kind of persuasion with it. Olive's immediate sentiment had been an instinctive general fear; but, later, she had dismissed that as unworthy; she had decided (and such a decision was nothing new), that where their mission was concerned they ought to face everything. Such an opportunity would contribute too much to Verena's reputation and authority to justify a refusal at the bidding of apprehensions which were after all only vague. Olive's specific terrors and dangers had by

this time very much blown over; Basil Ransom had given no sign of life for ages, and Henry Burrage had certainly got his quietus before they went to Europe. If it had occurred to his mother that she might convert Verena into the animating principle of a big soirée, she was at least acting in good faith, for it could be no more her wish to-day that he should marry Selah Tarrant's daughter than it was her wish a year before. And then they should do some good to the benighted, the most benighted, the fashionable benighted; they should perhaps make them furious—there was always some good in that. Lastly, Olive was conscious of a personal temptation in the matter; she was not insensible to the pleasure of appearing in a distinguished New York circle as a representative woman, an important Bostonian, the prompter, colleague, associate of one of the most original girls of the time. Basil Ransom was the person she had least expected to meet at Mrs. Burrage's; it had been her belief that they might easily spend four days in a city of more than a million of inhabitants without that disagreeable accident. But it had occurred; nothing was wanting to make it seem serious; and, setting her teeth, she shook herself, morally, hard, for having fallen into the trap of fate. Well, she would scramble out, with only a scare, probably. Henry Burrage was very attentive, but somehow she didn't fear him now; and it was only

natural he should feel that he couldn't be polite enough, after they had consented to be exploited in that worldly way by his mother. The other danger was the worst; the palpitation of her strange dread, the night of Miss Birdseye's party, came back to her. Mr. Burrage seemed, indeed, a protection; she reflected, with relief, that it had been arranged that after taking Verena to drive in the Park and see the Museum of Art in the morning, they should in the evening dine with him at Delmonico's (he was to invite another gentleman), and go afterwards to the German opera. Olive had kept all this to herself, as I have said; revealing to her sister neither the vividness of her prevision that Basil Ransom would look blank when he came down to Tenth Street and learned they had flitted, nor the eagerness of her desire just to find herself once more in the Boston train. It had been only this prevision that sustained her when she gave Mr. Ransom their number.

Verena came to her room shortly before luncheon, to let her know she had returned; and while they sat there, waiting to stop their ears when the gong announcing the repast was beaten, at the foot of the stairs, by a negro in a white jacket, she narrated to her friend her adventures with Mr. Burrage—expatiated on the beauty of the park, the splendour and interest of the Museum, the wonder of the young man's acquaintance with everything it contained, the

swiftness of his horses, the softness of his English cart, the pleasure of rolling at that pace over roads as firm as marble, the entertainment he promised them for the evening. Olive listened in serious silence; she saw Verena was quite carried away; of course she hadn't gone so far with her without knowing that phase.

'Did Mr. Burrage try to make love to you?' Miss Chancellor inquired at last, without a smile.

Verena had taken off her hat to arrange her feather, and as she placed it on her head again, her uplifted arms making a frame for her face, she said: 'Yes, I suppose it was meant for love.'

Olive waited for her to tell more, to tell how she had treated him, kept him in his place, made him feel that that question was over long ago; but as Verena gave her no farther information she did not insist, conscious as she always was that in such a relation as theirs there should be a great respect on either side for the liberty of each. She had never yet infringed on Verena's, and of course she wouldn't begin now. Moreover, with the request that she meant presently to make of her she felt that she must be discreet. She wondered whether Henry Burrage were really going to begin again; whether his mother had only been acting in his interest in getting them to come on. Certainly, the bright spot in such a prospect was that if she listened to

him she couldn't listen to Basil Ransom; and he *had* told Olive herself last night, when he put them into their carriage, that he hoped to prove to her yet that he had come round to her gospel. But the old sickness stole upon her again, the faintness of discouragement, as she asked herself why in the name of pity Verena should listen to any one at all but Olive Chancellor. Again it came over her, when she saw the brightness, the happy look, the girl brought back, as it had done in the earlier months, that the great trouble was that weak spot of Verena's, that sole infirmity and subtle flaw, which she had expressed to her very soon after they began to live together, in saying (she remembered it through the ineffaceable impression made by her friend's avowal), 'I'll tell you what is the matter with you—you don't dislike men as a class!' Verena had replied on this occasion, 'Well, no, I don't dislike them when they are pleasant!' As if organised atrociousness could ever be pleasant! Olive disliked them most when they were least unpleasant. After a little, at present, she remarked, referring to Henry Burrage: 'It is not right of him, not decent, after your making him feel how, while he was at Cambridge, he wearied you, tormented you.'

'Oh, I didn't show anything,' said Verena, gaily. 'I am learning to dissimulate,' she added in a moment. 'I suppose you have to as you go along. I pretend not to notice.'

At this moment the gong sounded for luncheon, and the two young women covered up their ears, face to face, Verena with her quick smile, Olive with her pale patience. When they could hear themselves speak, the latter said abruptly:

'How did Mrs. Burrage come to invite Mr. Ransom to her party? He told Adeline he had never seen her before.'

'Oh, I asked her to send him an invitation—after she had written to me, to thank me, when it was definitely settled we should come on. She asked me in her letter if there were any friends of mine in the city to whom I should like her to send cards, and I mentioned Mr. Ransom.'

Verena spoke without a single instant's hesitation, and the only sign of embarrassment she gave was that she got up from her chair, passing in this manner a little out of Olive's scrutiny. It was easy for her not to falter, because she was glad of the chance. She wanted to be very simple in all her relations with her friend, and of course it was not simple so soon as she began to keep things back. She could at any rate keep back as little as possible, and she felt as if she were making up for a dereliction when she answered Olive's inquiry so promptly.

'You never told me of that,' Miss Chancellor remarked, in a low tone.

'I didn't want to. I know you don't like him, and I

thought it would give you pain. Yet I wanted him to be there—I wanted him to hear.'

'What does it matter—why should you care about him?'

'Well, because he is so awfully opposed!'

'How do you know that, Verena?'

At this point Verena began to hesitate. It was not, after all, so easy to keep back only a little; it appeared rather as if one must either tell everything or hide everything. The former course had already presented itself to her as unduly harsh; it was because it seemed so that she had ended by keeping the incident of Basil Ransom's visit to Monadnoc Place buried in unspoken, in unspeakable, considerations, the only secret she had in the world—the only thing that was all her own. She was so glad to say what she could without betraying herself that it was only after she had spoken that she perceived there was a danger of Olive's pushing the inquiry to the point where, to defend herself as it were, she should be obliged to practise a positive deception; and she was conscious at the same time that the moment her secret was threatened it became dearer to her. She began to pray silently that Olive might not push; for it would be odious, it would be impossible, to defend herself by a lie. Meanwhile, however, she had to answer, and the way she answered was by exclaiming, much

more quickly than the reflections I note might have appeared to permit, 'Well, if you can't tell from his appearance! He's the type of the reactionary.'

Verena went to the toilet-glass to see that she had put on her hat properly, and Olive slowly got up, in the manner of a person not in the least eager for food. 'Let him react as he likes—for heaven's sake don't mind him!' That was Miss Chancellor's rejoinder, and Verena felt that it didn't say all that was in her mind. She wished she would come down to luncheon, for she, at least, was honestly hungry. She even suspected Olive had an idea she was afraid to express, such distress it would bring with it. 'Well, you know, Verena, this isn't our *real* life—it isn't our work,' Olive went on.

'Well, no, it isn't, certainly,' said Verena, not pretending at first that she did not know what Olive meant. In a moment, however, she added, 'Do you refer to this social intercourse with Mr. Burrage?'

'Not to that only.' Then Olive asked abruptly, looking at her, 'How did you know his address?'

'His address?'

'Mr. Ransom's—to enable Mrs. Burrage to invite him?'

They stood for a moment interchanging a gaze. 'It was in a letter I got from him.'

At these words there came into Olive's face an expres-

sion which made her companion cross over to her directly and take her by the hand. But the tone was different from what Verena expected when she said, with cold surprise: 'Oh, you are in correspondence!' It showed an immense effort of self-control.

'He wrote to me once—I never told you,' Verena rejoined, smiling. She felt that her friend's strange, uneasy eyes searched very far; a little more and they would go to the very bottom. Well, they might go if they would; she didn't, after all, care so much about her secret as that. For the moment, however, Verena did not learn what Olive had discovered, inasmuch as she only remarked presently that it was really time to go down. As they descended the staircase she put her arm into Miss Chancellor's and perceived that she was trembling.

Of course there were plenty of people in New York interested in the uprising, and Olive had made appointments, in advance, which filled the whole afternoon. Everybody wanted to meet them, and wanted everybody else to do so, and Verena saw they could easily have quite a vogue, if they only chose to stay and work that vein. Very likely, as Olive said, it wasn't their real life, and people didn't seem to have such a grip of the movement as they had in Boston; but there was something in the air that carried one along, and a sense of vastness and variety,

of the infinite possibilities of a great city, which—Verena hardly knew whether she ought to confess it to herself—might in the end make up for the want of the Boston earnestness. Certainly, the people seemed very much alive, and there was no other place where so many cheering reports could flow in, owing to the number of electric feelers that stretched away everywhere. The principal centre appeared to be Mrs. Croucher's, on Fifty-sixth Street, where there was an informal gathering of sympathisers who didn't seem as if they could forgive her when they learned that she had been speaking the night before in a circle in which none of them were acquainted. Certainly, they were very different from the group she had addressed at Mrs. Burrage's, and Verena heaved a thin, private sigh, expressive of some helplessness, as she thought what a big, complicated world it was, and how it evidently contained a little of everything. There was a general demand that she should repeat her address in a more congenial atmosphere; to which she replied that Olive made her engagements for her, and that as the address had been intended just to lead people on, perhaps she would think Mrs. Croucher's friends had reached a higher point. She was as cautious as this because she saw that Olive was now just straining to get out of the city; she didn't want to say anything that would tie them. When she felt her

trembling that way before luncheon it made her quite sick to realise how much her friend was wrapped up in her—how terribly she would suffer from the least deviation. After they had started for their round of engagements the very first thing Verena spoke of in the carriage (Olive had taken one, in her liberal way, for the whole time), was the fact that her correspondence with Mr. Ransom, as her friend had called it, had consisted on his part of only one letter. It was a very short one, too; it had come to her a little more than a month before. Olive knew she got letters from gentlemen; she didn't see why she should attach such importance to this one. Miss Chancellor was leaning back in the carriage, very still, very grave, with her head against the cushioned surface, only turning her eyes towards the girl.

'You attach importance yourself; otherwise you would have told me.'

'I knew you wouldn't like it—because you don't like *him*.'

'I don't think of him,' said Olive; 'he's nothing to me.' Then she added, suddenly, 'Have you noticed that I am afraid to face what I don't like?'

Verena could not say that she had, and yet it was not just on Olive's part to speak as if she were an easy person to tell such a thing to: the way she lay there, white and

weak, like a wounded creature, sufficiently proved the contrary. 'You have such a fearful power of suffering,' she replied in a moment.

To this at first Miss Chancellor made no rejoinder; but after a little she said, in the same attitude, 'Yes, *you* could make me.'

Verena took her hand and held it awhile. 'I never will, till I have been through everything myself.'

'*You* were not made to suffer—you were made to enjoy,' Olive said, in very much the same tone in which she had told her that what was the matter with her was that she didn't dislike men as a class—a tone which implied that the contrary would have been much more natural and perhaps rather higher. Perhaps it would; but Verena was unable to rebut the charge; she felt this, as she looked out of the window of the carriage at the bright, amusing city, where the elements seemed so numerous, the animation so immense, the shops so brilliant, the women so strikingly dressed, and knew that these things quickened her curiosity, all her pulses.

'Well, I suppose I mustn't presume on it,' she remarked, glancing back at Olive with her natural sweetness, her uncontradicting grace.

That young lady lifted her hand to her lips—held it there a moment; the movement seemed to say, 'When

you are so divinely docile, how can I help the dread of losing you?' This idea, however, was unspoken, and Olive Chancellor's uttered words, as the carriage rolled on, were different.

'Verena, I don't understand why he wrote to you.'

'He wrote to me because he likes me. Perhaps you'll say you don't understand why he likes me,' the girl continued, laughing. 'He liked me the first time he saw me.'

'Oh, that time!' Olive murmured.

'And still more the second.'

'Did he tell you that in his letter?' Miss Chancellor inquired.

'Yes, my dear, he told me that. Only he expressed it more gracefully.' Verena was very happy to say that; a written phrase of Basil Ransom's sufficiently justified her.

'It was my intuition—it was my foreboding!' Olive exclaimed, closing her eyes.

'I thought you said you didn't dislike him.'

'It isn't dislike—it's simple dread. Is that all there is between you?'

'Why, Olive Chancellor, what do you think?' Verena asked, feeling now distinctly like a coward. Five minutes afterwards she said to Olive that if it would give her pleasure they would leave New York on the morrow, with-

out taking a fourth day; and as soon as she had done so she felt better, especially when she saw how gratefully Olive looked at her for the concession, how eagerly she rose to the offer in saying, 'Well, if you *do* feel that it isn't our own life—our very own!' It was with these words, and others besides, and with an unusually weak, indefinite kiss, as if she wished to protest that, after all, a single day didn't matter, and yet accepted the sacrifice and was a little ashamed of it—it was in this manner that the agreement as to an immediate retreat was sealed. Verena could not shut her eyes to the fact that for a month she had been less frank, and if she wished to do penance this abbreviation of their pleasure in New York, even if it made her almost completely miss Basil Ransom, was easier than to tell Olive just now that the letter was *not* all, that there had been a long visit, a talk, and a walk besides, which she had been covering up for ever so many weeks. And of what consequence, anyway, was the missing? Was it such a pleasure to converse with a gentleman who only wanted to let you know—and why he should want it so much Verena couldn't guess—that he thought you quite preposterous? Olive took her from place to place, and she ended by forgetting everything but the present hour, and the bigness and variety of New York, and the entertainment of rolling about in a carriage with silk cushions, and meeting new

faces, new expressions of curiosity and sympathy, assurances that one was watched and followed. Mingled with this was a bright consciousness, sufficient for the moment, that one was moreover to dine at Delmonico's and go to the German opera. There was enough of the epicurean in Verena's composition to make it easy for her in certain conditions to live only for the hour.

XXXI.

When she returned with her companion to the establishment in Tenth Street she saw two notes lying on the table in the hall; one of which she perceived to be addressed to Miss Chancellor, the other to herself. The hand was different, but she recognised both. Olive was behind her on the steps, talking to the coachman about sending another carriage for them in half an hour (they had left themselves but just time to dress); so that she simply possessed herself of her own note and ascended to her room. As she did so she felt that all the while she had known it would be there, and was conscious of a kind of treachery, an unfriendly wilfulness, in not being more prepared for it. If she could roll about New York the whole afternoon and forget that there might be difficulties ahead, that didn't alter the fact that there *were* difficulties, and that they might even become considerable—might not be settled by her simply going back to Boston. Half an hour later, as she drove up the Fifth Avenue with Olive (there seemed to be so much

crowded into that one day), smoothing her light gloves, wishing her fan were a little nicer, and proving by the answering, familiar brightness with which she looked out on the lamp-lighted streets that, whatever theory might be entertained as to the genesis of her talent and her personal nature, the blood of the lecture-going, night-walking Tarrants did distinctly flow in her veins; as the pair proceeded, I say, to the celebrated restaurant, at the door of which Mr. Burrage had promised to be in vigilant expectancy of their carriage, Verena found a sufficiently gay and natural tone of voice for remarking to her friend that Mr. Ransom had called upon her while they were out, and had left a note in which there were many compliments for Miss Chancellor.

'That's wholly your own affair, my dear,' Olive replied, with a melancholy sigh, gazing down the vista of Fourteenth Street (which they happened just then to be traversing, with much agitation), toward the queer barrier of the elevated railway.

It was nothing new to Verena that if the great striving of Olive's life was for justice she yet sometimes failed to arrive at it in particular cases; and she reflected that it was rather late for her to say, like that, that Basil Ransom's letters were only his correspondent's business. Had not his kinswoman quite made the subject her own during their drive that afternoon? Verena determined now that her

companion should hear all there was to be heard about the letter; asking herself whether, if she told her at present more than she cared to know, it wouldn't make up for her hitherto having told her less. 'He brought it with him, written, in case I should be out. He wants to see me to-morrow—he says he has ever so much to say to me. He proposes an hour—says he hopes it won't be inconvenient for me to see him about eleven in the morning; thinks I may have no other engagement so early as that. Of course our return to Boston settles it,' Verena added, with serenity.

Miss Chancellor said nothing for a moment; then she replied, 'Yes, unless you invite him to come on with you in the train.'

'Why, Olive, how bitter you are!' Verena exclaimed, in genuine surprise.

Olive could not justify her bitterness by saying that her companion had spoken as if she were disappointed, because Verena had not. So she simply remarked, 'I don't see what he can have to say to you—that would be worth your hearing.'

'Well, of course, it's the other side. He has got it on the brain!' said Verena, with a laugh which seemed to relegate the whole matter to the category of the unimportant.

'If we should stay, would you see him—at eleven o'clock?' Olive inquired.

'Why do you ask that—when I have given it up?'

'Do you consider it such a tremendous sacrifice?'

'No,' said Verena good-naturedly; 'but I confess I am curious.'

'Curious—how do you mean?'

'Well, to hear the other side.'

'Oh heaven!' Olive Chancellor murmured, turning her face upon her.

'You must remember I have never heard it.' And Verena smiled into her friend's wan gaze.

'Do you want to hear all the infamy that is in the world?'

'No, it isn't that; but the more he should talk the better chance he would give me. I guess I can meet him.'

'Life is too short. Leave him as he is.'

'Well,' Verena went on, 'there are many I haven't cared to move at all, whom I might have been more interested in than in him. But to make him give in just at two or three points—that I should like better than anything I have done.'

'You have no business to enter upon a contest that isn't equal; and it wouldn't be, with Mr. Ransom.'

'The inequality would be that I have right on my side.'

'What is that—for a man? For what was their brutality given them, but to make that up?'

'I don't think he's brutal; I should like to see,' said Verena gaily.

Olive's eyes lingered a little on her own; then they turned away, vaguely, blindly, out of the carriage-window, and Verena made the reflection that she looked strangely little like a person who was going to dine at Delmonico's. How terribly she worried about everything, and how tragical was her nature; how anxious, suspicious, exposed to subtle influences! In their long intimacy Verena had come to revere most of her friend's peculiarities; they were a proof of her depth and devotion, and were so bound up with what was noble in her that she was rarely provoked to criticise them separately. But at present, suddenly, Olive's earnestness began to appear as inharmonious with the scheme of the universe as if it had been a broken saw; and she was positively glad she had not told her about Basil Ransom's appearance in Monadnoc Place. If she worried so about what she knew, how much would she not have worried about the rest! Verena had by this time made up her mind that her acquaintance with Mr. Ransom was the most episodical, most superficial, most unimportant of all possible relations.

Olive Chancellor watched Henry Burrage very closely

that evening; she had a special reason for doing so, and her entertainment, during the successive hours, was derived much less from the delicate little feast over which this insinuating proselyte presided, in the brilliant public room of the establishment, where French waiters flitted about on deep carpets and parties at neighbouring tables excited curiosity and conjecture, or even from the magnificent music of 'Lohengrin,' than from a secret process of comparison and verification, which shall presently be explained to the reader. As some discredit has possibly been thrown upon her impartiality it is a pleasure to be able to say that on her return from the opera she took a step dictated by an earnest consideration of justice—of the promptness with which Verena had told her of the note left by Basil Ransom in the afternoon. She drew Verena into her room with her. The girl, on the way back to Tenth Street, had spoken only of Wagner's music, of the singers, the orchestra, the immensity of the house, her tremendous pleasure. Olive could see how fond she might become of New York, where that kind of pleasure was so much more in the air.

'Well, Mr. Burrage was certainly very kind to us—no one could have been more thoughtful,' Olive said; and she coloured a little at the look with which Verena greeted this tribute of appreciation from Miss Chancellor to a single gentleman.

'I am so glad you were struck with that, because I do think we have been a little rough to him.' Verena's *we* was angelic. 'He was particularly attentive to you, my dear; he has got over me. He looked at you so sweetly. Dearest Olive, if you marry him —— !' And Miss Tarrant, who was in high spirits, embraced her companion, to check her own silliness.

'He wants you to stay there, all the same. They haven't given *that* up,' Olive remarked, turning to a drawer, out of which she took a letter.

'Did he tell you that, pray? He said nothing more about it to me.'

'When we came in this afternoon I found this note from Mrs. Burrage. You had better read it.' And she presented the document, open, to Verena.

The purpose of it was to say that Mrs. Burrage could really not reconcile herself to the loss of Verena's visit, on which both she and her son had counted so much. She was sure they would be able to make it as interesting to Miss Tarrant as it would be to themselves. She, Mrs. Burrage, moreover, felt as if she hadn't heard half she wanted about Miss Tarrant's views, and there were so many more who were present at the address, who had come to her that afternoon (losing not a minute, as Miss Chancellor could see), to ask how in the world they too could learn

more—how they could get at the fair speaker and question her about certain details. She hoped so much, therefore, that even if the young ladies should be unable to alter their decision about the visit they might at least see their way to staying over long enough to allow her to arrange an informal meeting for some of these poor thirsty souls. Might she not at least talk over the question with Miss Chancellor? She gave her notice that she would attack her on the subject of the visit too. Might she not see her on the morrow, and might she ask of her the very great favour that the interview should be at Mrs. Burrage's own house? She had something very particular to say to her, as regards which perfect privacy was a great consideration, and Miss Chancellor would doubtless recognise that this would be best secured under Mrs. Burrage's roof. She would therefore send her carriage for Miss Chancellor at any hour that would be convenient to the latter. She really thought much good might come from their having a satisfactory talk.

Verena read this epistle with much deliberation; it seemed to her mysterious, and confirmed the idea she had received the night before—the idea that she had not got quite a correct impression of this clever, worldly, curious woman on the occasion of her visit to Cambridge, when they met her at her son's rooms. As she gave the letter back to Olive she said, 'That's why he didn't seem to

believe we are really leaving to-morrow. He knows she had written that, and he thinks it will keep us.'

'Well, if I were to say it may—should you think me too miserably changeful?'

Verena stared, with all her candour, and it was so very queer that Olive should now wish to linger that the sense of it, for the moment, almost covered the sense of its being pleasant. But that came out after an instant, and she said, with great honesty, 'You needn't drag me away for consistency's sake. It would be absurd for me to pretend that I don't like being here.'

'I think perhaps I ought to see her.' Olive was very thoughtful.

'How lovely it must be to have a secret with Mrs. Burrage!' Verena exclaimed.

'It won't be a secret from you.'

'Dearest, you needn't tell me unless you want,' Verena went on, thinking of her own unimparted knowledge.

'I thought it was our plan to divide everything. It was certainly mine.'

'Ah, don't talk about plans!' Verena exclaimed, rather ruefully. 'You see, if we *are* going to stay to-morrow, how foolish it was to have any. There is more in her letter than is expressed,' she added, as Olive appeared to be studying in her face the reasons for and against making

this concession to Mrs. Burrage, and that was rather embarrassing.

'I thought it over all the evening—so that if now you will consent we will stay.'

'Darling—what a spirit you have got! All through all those dear little dishes—all through "Lohengrin!" As I haven't thought it over at all, you must settle it. You know I am not difficult.'

'And would you go and stay with Mrs. Burrage, after all, if she should say anything to me that seems to make it desirable?'

Verena broke into a laugh. 'You know it's not our real life!'

Olive said nothing for a moment; then she replied: 'Don't think *I* can forget that. If I suggest a deviation, it's only because it sometimes seems to me that perhaps, after all, almost anything is better than the form reality *may* take with us.' This was slightly obscure, as well as very melancholy, and Verena was relieved when her companion remarked, in a moment, 'You must think me strangely inconsequent;' for this gave her a chance to reply, soothingly:

'Why, you don't suppose I expect you to keep always screwed up! I will stay a week with Mrs. Burrage, or a fortnight, or a month, or anything you like,' she pursued;

'anything it may seem to you best to tell her after you have seen her.'

'Do you leave it all to me? You don't give me much help,' Olive said.

'Help to what?'

'Help to help *you*.'

'I don't want any help; I am quite strong enough!' Verena cried, gaily. The next moment she inquired, in an appeal half comical, half touching, 'My dear colleague, why do you make me say such conceited things?'

'And if you do stay—just even to-morrow—shall you be —very much of the time—with Mr. Ransom?'

As Verena for the moment appeared ironically-minded, she might have found a fresh subject for hilarity in the tremulous, tentative tone in which Olive made this inquiry. But it had not that effect; it produced the first manifestation of impatience—the first, literally, and the first note of reproach—that had occurred in the course of their remarkable intimacy. The colour rose to Verena's cheek, and her eye for an instant looked moist.

'I don't know what you always think, Olive, nor why you don't seem able to trust me. You didn't, from the first with gentlemen. Perhaps you were right then—I don't say, but surely it is very different now. I don't think I ought to be suspected so much. Why have you a manner as if I

had to be watched, as if I wanted to run away with every man that speaks to me? I should think I had proved how little I care. I thought you had discovered by this time that I am serious; that I have dedicated my life; that there is something unspeakably dear to me. But you begin again, every time—you don't do me justice. I must take everything that comes. I mustn't be afraid. I thought we had agreed that we were to do our work in the midst of the world, facing everything, keeping straight on, always taking hold. And now that it all opens out so magnificently, and victory is really sitting on our banners, it is strange of you to doubt of me, to suppose I am not more wedded to all our old dreams than ever. I told you the first time I saw you that I could renounce, and knowing better to-day, perhaps, what that means, I am ready to say it again. That I can, that I will! Why, Olive Chancellor,' Verena cried, panting, a moment, with her eloquence, and with the rush of a culminating idea, 'haven't you discovered by this time that I *have* renounced?'

The habit of public speaking, the training, the practice, in which she had been immersed, enabled Verena to unroll a coil of propositions dedicated even to a private interest with the most touching, most cumulative effect. Olive was completely aware of this, and she stilled herself, while the girl uttered one soft, pleading sentence after another,

into the same rapt attention she was in the habit of sending up from the benches of an auditorium. She looked at Verena fixedly, felt that she was stirred to her depths, that she was exquisitely passionate and sincere, that she was a quivering, spotless, consecrated maiden, that she really had renounced, that they were both safe, and that her own injustice and indelicacy had been great. She came to her slowly, took her in her arms and held her long—giving her a silent kiss. From which Verena knew that she believed her.

END OF VOL. II.

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